

New state vet named

The Kentucky State Board of Agriculture unanimously selected Dr. Steve Velasco III to serve as the new state veterinarian at the Kentucky Department of Agriculture.

"The role of Kentucky state veterinarian is a critical one for the health of our agricultural animals across the state and the public at large," said Agriculture Commissioner Dr. Ryan Quarles, who serves as SBOA chairman. "Dr. Velasco's vast experience sets him up to fulfill this task with great professionalism and skills. The board has done a wonderful job in searching for the best candidate for this important position. We are excited for him to join our team and look forward to his contributions for the betterment of our agricultural sector."

The state veterinarian is an agent of the State Board of Agriculture and leads the KDA's Office of State Veterinarian in its statutory and regulatory activities to prevent, control, and eradicate communicable diseases in the agricultural animal health sector.

Specific duties of the State Veterinarian include:

- Serve as the executive director of the Office of State Veterinarian;
- Oversee all functions of the Office of State Veterinarian;
- Ensure statutes and regulations are enforced;
- Participate on the Commissioner of Agriculture's executive team;
- Advise the commissioner on issues involving animal health and other issues as requested;
- Testify to legislative committees as requested;
- Serve as a liaison to livestock and poultry organizations and leaders; and
- Represent Kentucky with the United States Animal Health Association, the National Institute for Animal Agriculture, Southern Animal Health Association, and other animal health organizations.

A search committee established by the board recommended Dr. Velasco, of Corpus Christi, Texas, to the State Board of Agriculture. Dr. Velasco replaces Dr. Katie Flynn, who announced her resignation from

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Unpaid cattle producers in alleged fraud case should file with USDA

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Service is notifying anyone who sold livestock to and has not received payment from McClain Farms Inc., a Benton, Ky. company; 7M Cattle Feeders Inc., Hereford, Texas; McClain Feed Yard Inc., Friona, Texas; or Brian McClain, Benton, Ky.; to file Dealer Trust claims promptly.

Greg Henderson wrote in Drovers that the notification comes after a massive fraudulent cattle scheme conned dozens of investors and a prominent agricultural lender out of \$100 million. McClain, who is accused of orchestrating the scheme, died by apparent suicide on April 18, Henderson wrote.

Rabo Agrifinance, which has filed bankruptcy in the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for Northern Texas,

accuses McClain and his two Texas feedyards of leaving the bank with \$50.6 million in unpaid loans on cattle no longer in their possession, Henderson wrote. Henderson reports that sources say McClain was taking on investors but paying them with borrowed money.

According to federal court records, Rabo Agrifinance LLC filed a federal civil lawsuit against McClain Feed Yard, Inc. in the Kentucky Western District Court on April 28. One the same day, McClain Feed Yard, Inc. filed for bankruptcy in the Texas Northern Bankruptcy Court. McClain's feed-

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Unpaid producers in alleged fraud case should file with USDA

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ing operations listed as many as 200 creditors and as much as \$100 million in liabilities. McClain Feed Yard is a 3,000-head operation, and 7M Feeders is a 115,000 head capacity.

TO FILE A CLAIM

Unpaid livestock sellers may be protected under a provision of the Packers and Stockyards Act of 1921, which requires all livestock purchased by a dealer in cash sales, and all receivables or proceeds from such livestock to be held in trust for the benefit of all unpaid cash sellers.

Unpaid sellers must act quickly as the law requires that claims be filed with USDA and McClain within 30 days after payment is due, or within 15 business days after a payment instrument issued to the livestock seller has been dishonored. Claim amounts should be for the gross amount McClain agreed to pay for livestock.

Claims should be submitted to: Agricultural Marketing Service, Fair Trade Practices Program, Packers and Stockyards Division, Midwestern Regional Office, 210 Walnut Street, Room 317, Des Moines, IA 50309. Claims may also be emailed to PSDDesMoinesIA@usda.gov.

For questions regarding the claims process, please contact the PSD Midwestern Regional Office at (515) 323-2579.

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New state vet named

FROM PAGE 1

the department in February.

"I'm excited to join the Kentucky Department of Agriculture, taking on the role as state veterinarian," Dr. Velasco said. "My career has been focused on being an advocate for animal health and public awareness. I look forward to continuing that path as I join the dedicated and professional team at KDA and work with the wonderful animal industry throughout Kentucky."

Dr. Velasco has served as a region director at the Texas Animal Health Commission, since 2020. In this role, he managed and directed regulatory programs, along with full time field and office staff. The role also required him to perform field work, as necessary; manage regional emergency disaster requirements; and perform outreach and educational programs for producers and the public, among other duties.

Dr. Velasco, born and raised in San Antonio, Texas, grew up participating

in 4-H horsemanship and competing in high school rodeo. Upon graduation, Dr. Velasco attended The University of Texas at San Antonio where he received a bachelor of science degree in chemistry followed by a master of business administration from The University of Texas at Austin. He later attended Texas A&M University where he received a bachelor of science in veterinary science and a doctor of veterinary medicine with an emphasis in large animals.

Dr. Velasco spent the first six years of his career as a racetrack veterinarian in Louisiana and Arkansas. In 2000, Dr. Velasco returned to South Texas where he spent the next 20 years at a large animal ambulatory practice, while also working in the equine sports medicine and stocker cattle industries, supporting 4-H and FFA programs, and providing veterinary services for wildlife.

Dr. Velasco has veterinary licenses in Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Kentucky. He is expected to join KDA in mid-June.

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MARKET REPORT: WEEK OF March 7, 2023

Farmers Regional Livestock Market of Glasgow, LLC

Supply included: 14% Feeder Cattle (93% Dairy Steers, 7% Heifers); 81% Slaughter Cattle (88% Cows, 12% Bulls); 5% Replacement Dairy Cattle (13% Fresh/Milking Cows, 1% Bred Cows, 12% Bred Heifers, 42% Open Heifers, 12% Baby Bull Calves, 20% Baby Heifer Calves). Feeder cattle supply over 600 lbs was 14%.

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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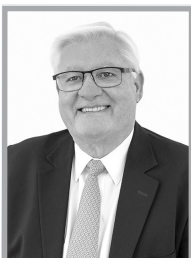


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Technology has changed the look of planting season but not the reasons



KENTUCKY FARM BUREAU PRESIDENT

Mark Haney

Advanced technology has made today's farms so much more productive.

As farm families across the state continue with spring planting, I'm reminded of how far we have come over the years in this process, from an agricultural technology standpoint, while never losing sight of the reasons we plant a crop.

The methods used decades before advanced technology made its way to the farm, were certainly slower and less productive than today's modern farming techniques that benefit from things like yield monitors, global positioning systems, satellite connectivity, and instant weather update capabilities, to name a few.

And these advancements haven't happened overnight. They have come through years of research that allow today's farmers to plant and harvest more than ever before with fewer inputs on less land.

Advanced technology has made today's farms so much more productive. In 1960, a farm family provided food for about 25 people. Today, one U.S. farm feeds approximately 166 people annually in this country and abroad.

By the year 2050, the world population will increase by more than 2 billion people, meaning farms will have to increase production by 70 percent. By the way, less than two percent of the U.S. population is comprised of farmers and ranchers.

This technology available to us now is, essentially, no longer a luxury, but a necessity for producers to meet the world's demand for food today and in the future.

But make no mistake, the work is still hard, and the days are long, often running into the nights. The window in which each crop must be planted to reap the best yields can sometimes close quickly and we must be productive in our efforts all the while dodging the many different weather conditions we face, especially in the spring.

There are those times when Mother Nature wins out and we have to go back to the drawing board to devise a different plan to make the growing season as prosperous as possible.

Yet, many of us have done this for generations because of tradition and the faith we have in the work we do to fulfill the need for the food we produce.

The anticipation and excitement of a new growing season remain the same for producers as much today as they did so many years ago regardless of the challenges

SEE TECHNOLOGY, PAGE 5

BURNING DOWN THE BARN: Our unsustainable livestock and poultry CAFO culture

The number in the headline was practically unbelievable. "About 18,000 Cattle Are Killed in Fire at Dairy Farm in Texas," reported the New York Times April 13.

The then-known facts—very few have been forthcoming since—were sparse: Around 7 p.m. on April 10, a fire roared through a dairy barn near Dimmit, Texas, "where thousands of dairy cows," mostly Holsteins and Jerseys, had been "crowded together waiting to be milked, trapped in deadly confines," noted USA Today.

The "deadly confines" were not, in any sense, confining. In fact, "If each animal stood 3 to 4 feet apart," explained the newspaper, the 18,000 cows that died in the fire were "enough to cover 26 football fields."

Imagine that hellscape: 26 roofed, wall-to-wall football fields ablaze with burning, bellowing Holstein and Jersey cows and there's nothing any man or beast could do but stand and watch it all burn.

While the massive scale of the Dimmit fire may be unprecedented in U.S. agricultural history, as numerous press outlets reported at the time, mega-death events in today's industrial scale livestock production are not.

For example, a "merciless" January 2016 blizzard in west Texas and eastern New Mexico killed an estimated 35,000 dairy cows, many buried in "snow drifts as high as 14 feet," reported the Times.

But other livestock and poultry operations, mostly housed in barns engineered to both protect animals from the weather and improve their productivity, have suffered even greater losses. According to the Animal Welfare Institute, 6 million chickens, 151,800 pigs, 194,400 turkeys, and 192,400 cattle died in fires on U.S. farms between January 2013 and January 2022.

But, noted Vox in its reporting on the Texas fire, "The true number is likely significantly higher... because not all states have the same reporting requirements, and because farm animals are property with essentially no legal protection from suffering."

Moreover, "Fires at livestock and poultry production and storage properties are quite common," it continued. The biggest reason, Vox noted in quoting the National Fire Protection Association, is that "Animal farms don't have the same fire codes and safety requirements as buildings designed for humans," like alarms and sprinklers.

That's incomprehensible given the staggering costs in both loss of life and property of these catastrophic fires.

For example, Bob Cropp, a professor emeritus and former dairy

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FOOD & FARM FILE

Alan Guebert

"Companies are using credits to make claims of reducing emissions when most of these credits don't represent emissions reductions at all."

The Farmer's Pride

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THE FARMER'S PRIDE

BURNING DOWN THE BARN: Our unsustainable livestock and poultry CAFO culture

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marketing and policy extension specialist at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, estimates that the Texas fire cost its owners somewhere between \$27 million and \$36 million in cows alone. Property losses mean “You can probably double that” to come up with a “total rough estimate” of \$55 million in losses.

But the “Real question agriculture needs to ask itself,” Cropp poses, isn’t how you prevent these massive, devastating fires but “why would you even build a dairy operation this size? After a couple of thousand cows, there’s little to no more efficiency to be gained by going bigger.”

The Texas dairy, according to state Agriculture Commissioner Sid Miller, had one, very American market: the world. “It is my understanding,” Miller told a Lubbock, TX media outlet April 20, “that the milk went to... make powdered milk, and most of that powdered milk is exported.”

Miller didn’t know it, but his explanation of why this industrialized dairy even existed characterizes one

of the most important, and deadly, tenets of U.S. farm policy: We do almost anything—overproduce, subsidize, deplete natural resources, endanger animals, break federal employment laws, and empty rural America—just for the chance to sell “more” overseas.

As such, the milk powder wasn’t the actual product the Texas CAFO (concentrated animal feeding operation) was selling abroad. The deal’s key ingredient to make the milk—that was then removed to make the milk powder—was the real export, the dirt cheap water from the ever-shrinking Ogallala Aquifer required by the dairy.

But few Americans ever talk about the actual costs of our costly livestock and poultry CAFO culture. Instead, we choose—ironically—to glorify its cheapness.

In the meantime, we burn irreplaceable parts of it to the ground.

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.

Technology has changed the look of planting season but not the reasons

FROM PAGE 4

we face; despite the volatile markets which we deal with daily; and in light of the misinformation we combat from those who are far removed from the farm and don’t understand what it takes to raise a crop so they might have regular meals and clothes on their backs.

While it is true that planting a crop

today looks much different than the methods used by the generations that came before us, we continue this tradition of farming by raising the most affordable, abundant, and safest food supply in the world. Thanks to all the farm families, today, who have learned from the past and prepare for the future as they continue in this planting season.

MARK HANEY is the former President of the Kentucky Farm Bureau Federation.

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Memorial Day weekend and what it is about

Your Memorial Day Cookout, brought to you by Kentucky’s soybean farmers!

Memorial Day is the official kickoff of the summer season, and as you make plans, I hope you’ll take time and recognize the reason this day is set aside – for the remembrance of those who gave the ultimate sacrifice for this great nation. Memorial Day is different than Veterans Day, which is observed in November.

While they both honor the military community, Memorial Day is reserved for honoring those who lost their lives in military service to our nation. Formerly known as “Decoration Day,” this observance began as a time to place spring memorial flowers on the graves of fallen soldiers. It’s not uncommon to see individual flags placed near headstones, and some cemeteries host Memorial Day services or erect wooden crosses to honor those who gave their lives for our freedoms. Veterans Day, on the other hand, is the time to celebrate those who have served in the U.S. military.

Remembering those who laid down their lives for this country is the most important part of the holiday weekend.

Many folks spend part of their three-day weekend with cookouts, and that bring to mind some of the wonderful summer foods that are brought to you – at least in part – by soybeans. No, I’m not advocating for tofu on the grill, but whether your protein of choice is chicken, pork, beef, or the unassuming hot dog (which can contain any or all of these), it’s safe to say that your protein likely consumed soy or soy components somewhere along the way. Animal ag is the soybean farmers’ number one domestic customer, consuming 97 percent of domestic soybean meal.

And let’s not forget about those condiments and side dishes! Whether you prefer your pasta salad and coleslaw as mayonnaise-based or oil-and-vinegar based, you can bet that there’s probably soybean oil (often labeled as vegetable oil) in the mix. Eating healthy and enjoying a grilled chicken or steak salad? Most all salad dressings contain soybean oil, and some of the creamy dressings also contain eggs or egg yolks.

The Kentucky farm families who grow your food (and your food’s food) hope that you enjoy your long weekend and that you take a moment to remember the meaning behind the holiday.



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Remembering those who laid down their lives for this country is the most important part of the holiday weekend.

Supreme Court OKs Calif. ban on tight confinement of sows

The U.S. Supreme Court has "preserved a California law banning the sale of pork in America's most populous state from pigs kept in tightly confined spaces, rejecting an industry challenge claiming that the voter-backed animal welfare measure impermissibly regulates out-of-state farmers," reports Nate Raymond of Reuters.

Pork producers contended that California's Proposition 12 tells out-of-state pork producers that if they want to tap into California's pork market, California voters can indirectly tell them how to raise their pigs. And that might not be all. The decision "was met with disappointment by many in U.S. agriculture, claiming it sets a dangerous precedent for animal agriculture moving forward," Morning AgClips reports.

"The justices voted 5-4 to uphold a lower court's dismissal of a lawsuit by the National Pork Producers Council and the American Farm Bureau Federation seeking to invalidate the law," Raymond reports. The lobbies argued that the Constitution's commerce clause, which gives the federal government the power to regulate interstate commerce, keeps the states from doing so in this case. NPPC President Scott Hays of Missouri told Raymond, "Allowing state overreach will increase prices for consumers and drive small farms out of business, leading to more consolidation."

Conservative Justice Neil Gorsuch, wrote in the decision, "While the Constitution addresses many weighty issues, the type of pork chops California merchants may sell is not on that list." Chief Justice John

Roberts and fellow conservatives Samuel Alito and Brett Kavanaugh, and liberal Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson, "said they would have allowed the challengers to the California law to pursue their claim in the lower courts," Raymond reports.

"California farms collectively are only a small part of the \$26 billion-a-year U.S. pork industry. The size of cages used at American pig farms is humane and necessary for animal safety, according to the industry, which asserts that California's law gives the state unwarranted influence over the pork sector. President Joe Biden's administration sided with the pork producers in the case, saying that states cannot ban products that pose no threat to public health or safety due to philosophical objections."

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Garlic & Herb Steak Salad



Ingredients:

- 1 beef Top Sirloin Steak Boneless, cut 3/4 inch thick (about 1 pound)
- 1 tablespoon garlic & herb or onion & herb no-salt seasoning
- 1 medium red onion, cut into 1/2-inch thick slices
- 6 cups fresh baby spinach
- 1 medium tomato, cut into wedges
- 2 hard-boiled eggs, peeled and sliced

Dressing:

- 2 tablespoons honey mustard
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 tablespoon water
- 2 teaspoons garlic & herb or onion & herb no-salt seasoning
- 2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice

Directions:

Combine Dressing ingredients in small bowl. Reserve 1/4 cup dressing for salad. Brush remaining dressing on onion slices.

Press 1 tablespoon seasoning blend evenly onto beef Top Sirloin Steak Boneless. Place steak in center of grid over medium, ash-covered coals; arrange onion slices around steak. Grill steak, covered, 7 to 11 minutes (over medium heat on preheated gas grill, covered, 8 to 13 minutes) for medium rare (145°F) to medium (160°F) doneness, turning occasionally. Grill onion 10 to 12 minutes (gas grill times remain the same) or until tender, turning occasionally.

Carve beef into slices. Divide spinach evenly among four plates. Top with steak slices, tomatoes, onions and eggs. Drizzle evenly with reserved 1/4 cup dressing.

Italian Beef Meatball Sandwich Rolls

Italian-Style Beef Sausage

- 2 eggs, divided
- 1/4 cup seasoned dry bread crumbs
- 12 cherry-sized mozzarella balls (about 6 ounces)
- 12 ounces refrigerated pizza dough
- 2 tablespoons shredded Parmesan cheese

Garnish:

Marinara sauce, chopped basil leaves

Directions:

Preheat oven to 400°F. Combine Italian-Style Beef Sausage mixture, 1 egg and bread crumbs in large bowl; mixing thoroughly. Shape into 12, 2-inch meatballs. Place a mozzarella ball in the middle of each meatball, making sure the mozzarella ball is completely covered with the beef mixture. Place meatballs on aluminum-foiled lined broiler rack coated with cooking spray. Bake in 400°F oven 24 to 27 minutes.

Cook's Tip: Italian-Style Beef Sausage: Combine 1 pound Ground Beef (93% lean or leaner), 1 teaspoon fennel seed, 1/2 teaspoon salt, 1/4 teaspoon ground coriander, 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder, 1/4 teaspoon paprika, 1/4 teaspoon black pepper and 1/8 to 1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper in large bowl, mixing lightly, but thoroughly.

Cut dough into 12 pieces, about 1 ounce each. Stretch each piece to cover 1 meatball, pinching the edges to seal. Place on parchment-lined shallow-rimmed baking sheet, seam-side down. Place remaining 1 egg in small bowl, beat with a fork. Brush rolls with egg; top with Parmesan cheese.

Bake rolls in 400°F oven 10 to 12 minutes or until golden brown. Serve with marinara sauce and basil, as desired.

Cheeseburger Dip

1 pound 90% Lean Ground Beef

3/4 cup onion, diced

2 Tablespoon ketchup

8 ounces cream cheese

1-1/2 cups Cheddar cheese

1 Tablespoon Worcestershire sauce

1 teaspoon granulated garlic

1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

3/4 cup dill pickle, chopped, divided

2 Tablespoon fresh parsley, chopped

1/4 cup Roma tomatoes, diced

Directions:

Heat nonstick skillet over medium heat until hot. Add Ground Beef; cook 8 to 10 minutes, breaking into 3/4-inch crumbles and stirring occasionally. Add in onion and continue to cook for 3 to 4 minutes. Remove from heat and allow to cool.

In a standing mixer combine cream cheese, cheddar cheese, ketchup, worcestershire sauce, garlic, pepper, and 1/2 cup of diced pickles until well incorporated. Add cooled beef mixture and mix until well incorporated. Remove bowl from mixer and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes or until ready to bake.

Spread the dip into a 8" cast iron or oven-proof skillet. Bake in a 375°F oven for 25 minutes or until golden brown and edges are bubbling. Remove from oven and top with remaining pickles, parsley, and diced tomatoes. Serve warm with potato chips or crackers.



Getting the moisture content right for baleage improves fermentation, but estimating windrow moisture can be challenging. Moisture can be measured using a microwave and a simple scale. The microwave test was used recently in Metcalfe County to estimate windrow moisture in wheat, shown above. Lessons learned that day will help you the next time you need to do a microwave moisture test.

Practicing what you preach

The Forage Doctor

By Jimmy Henning



In a previous column, I quoted my good friend Dr. Gary Bates at the University of Tennessee to say that 'my knowledge exceeds my obedience.' This week, I relived that little phrase. I tried to help a producer estimate moisture content of some wheat (in the windrow) so they could bale it at between 50 and 60 percent moisture. When I got there, I realized that I was going to be on the line for delivering the final word on when to bale several acres of small grains for baleage. Since we 'preach' about measuring moisture using a microwave, I thought, 'what the heck, I can do this.'

Briefly, drying forage in a microwave requires taking a sample of forage from the windrow, chopping it, placing it in a paper bag (or small box), taking a fresh weight and then microwaving the forage for short intervals until it is dry and the weight remains constant. After that, it is just math. You can read how to do a microwave test in our UKY publication AGR-235, Baleage: Frequently Asked Questions.

The process is certainly simple enough and I was able to carry it out (mostly). However, I learned a few things about what not to do in the process that will help you should you try to

do so.

First my sample was too large. It was more than a double-fist sized sample. You can dry large samples in a microwave, but it takes a LONG time.

Second, I did not have any large hedge shears to chop the forage into smaller lengths, so I just left it long. Again, this is okay, but it makes it hard to agitate the forage and release some of the steam and heat between microwave cycles. Just so you know, it IS possible to ignite wheat forage in a microwave.

Third, I had to tear the bag and fold down the excess height so that it would fit in the microwave. That is okay but the bag loses some of its integrity especially as it gets moist with steam.

Fourth, I did not have a glass of water (recommended in the UKY publication) to place in the microwave to help absorb some of the energy. This is recommended by some microwave manufacturers to prevent damage to the magnetron. I had previously (years ago) dried forage in microwaves without the glass of water, so I proceeded without. And except for leaving the microwave a little smoky from my overheated forage, I apparently did not kill the appliance.

It took many, many short cycles of microwaving at less than full power to achieve something like dry forage. In the end, my impatience caused the forage to get a smidge 'overheated', necessitating immersion in water to insure I



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Practicing what you preach

FROM PAGE 9

did not burn the house down.

As it turned out, the moisture estimation from my microwave fiasco was reasonably close and the actual moisture content of the bales fell well within the optimal range for baleage. As a side benefit, my experience helped me create this list of 'modified' recommendations for the next time you (or I) do a microwave test for moisture.

1. Start with a small sample. I started with over 200 grams. Half of that would have been more reasonable.

2. Chop the sample using hedge shears.

3. Use a small paper box or heavy paper plate rather than a paper bag. This will work in smaller microwaves and the forage can easily be spread out to cool off between heating cycles.

4. Use the glass of water. Just in case.

5. Because of the length of time this takes (easily 30 minutes or more), I recommend doing the test at the end of the afternoon of the day of cutting. You will be under much less pressure to get a number in a hurry. Most of the time,

you will know enough to determine if you are baling the next day or not.

Fresh forage will be between 75 and 80% moisture. If you are at 70% moisture at the end of the first day, and the next day is set to be warm and sunny, conditions should be right to bale by the next afternoon. If you end the day at 70% moisture and the next day is going to be cool and damp (such as when the ground is damp), then the forage will likely need an extra day.

Perfecting your microwaving technique will let you get much better at estimating the moisture content of forage as it dries. As you do this, you will learn that our perennial grasses like fescue and orchardgrass dry much faster than small grains, typically. I strongly recommend that you do a fermentation test after the forage is fully ensiled (typically 4 to 6 weeks) to determine the 'actual' moisture content and to assess how well the baleage fermented.

Please don't be afraid to do a microwave test - just benefit from my mistakes.

Happy foraging.



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BEEF MONTH: Why beef producers are a 'cut above'

May is National Beef Month, and what better time to salute the Kentucky 32,000 beef producers? Let's recognize the hard work of our beef-producing families by looking at the end product - the beef that goes on the table.

University of Kentucky Extension Meats Specialist Dr. Gregg Rentfrow discussed trends in the beef industry and how to prepare some of the new cuts.

"Let's face it, we celebrate with beef. No one says let's go out for a chicken breast; no, we say let's go get a steak," Rentfrow said. While the United States may consume more poultry, beef means celebration for special occasions, he continued.

The retail meat counters are transitioning from the winter comfort cuts for stews, soups, and roasts to the grill, and beef unit prices, like everything else, have increased. Rentfrow said that retailers are using what he called sizeflation - While the unit price of a steak might have increased, the package the consumer selects will still be within their budget because the package may contain 12-14 ounces instead of a pound.

An increase in energy costs combined with a longer pandemic recovery increased prices. Rentfrow said the cattle industry takes 16-18 months to produce a marketable meat product, whereas pork takes five to six months, and chicken even less. That slow turnaround time has hampered the beef industry from total post-pandemic production.

The beef industry recognizes that the porterhouse, ribeye, and strips are the go-to for special events, but the price hinders consumers from making weekly purchases. Rentfrow credits Alison Smith, director of retail and foodservice for the Kentucky Beef Council, and UK's educational programs as helping consumers learn to purchase and prepare cuts from the fewer tender areas of the beef carcass.

Anyone having the pleasure of Dr. Bill Moody's meats science class knows there are two areas of the carcass used - one for locomotion and one for support. The chuck and round are locomotion, and the rib, loin, and sirloin are supported. The degree of tenderness is directly related to the function of those muscles, and the chuck comprises several different, less tender muscles. The chuck and the rounds require cooking differently than meat from the support areas.

The flat iron steak has been in the meat case since 2007 and was "discovered" by meat researchers looking to generate more consumption of cuts from the chuck. The flat iron, or top blade steak, is dissected from the chuck roll and shaped like an old-fashioned flat iron. It is second in tenderness only to the tenderloin or filet mignon, is well-marbled, and has the beefy flavor of a New York strip. The beef carcass only produces two of these 1-to-1.5 pound steaks.

Another cut from the chuck that is trending is the Denver cut. It is fabricated from under the shoulder blade and not used in locomotion to the extent of other areas of the shoulder. The Denver is tender, and its flavor crosses a New York strip and a ribeye. The

Denver cut, less thick than either, must reach 145 degrees or medium rare.

Rentfrow noted that this is an excellent time to discuss the temperatures of meat. Many chefs proclaim that medium rare is the best temperature for any

steak. Rentfrow said he is regularly told, "I don't want blood" when encouraging a medium rare steak.

First, the beef carcass loses 98 percent of its blood

SEE BEEF, PAGE 14

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BEEF MONTH: Why beef producers are a 'cut above'

FROM PAGE 12

within two minutes of harvest, and second, a steak is 75 percent water. If not allowed to rest before cutting, the liquid, which contains myoglobin, a chemical compound that provides oxygen to the muscle, comes flooding out. The beef industry has several new cuts that reflect a western connotation. Not only is there Denver but also Santa Fe and San Antonio. These cuts Rentfrow believes appeal more to millennials and Gen Z consumers and aren't "old fashioned sounding."

He could directly relate to that concept when he remembered a discussion with meat science students, and the ribeye came up.

He laughed when he recalled how one student with distance in her voice said,

"Oh, that's what my dad eats."

The beef industry works hard to promote beef to all consumers, developing recipes and putting beef on the table for every meal.

But it's time to congratulate Kentucky's beef producers, who rank eighth in the nation in beef cattle inventory and is the largest beef state east of the Mississippi River. There are 2 million cattle, including dairy, in the state at any time. Cattle gross receipts totaled \$879 million in 2021, ranking fifth in Kentucky agriculture commodities.

Let's celebrate - ribeye - medium rare, please.

For recipes for great beef meals check out kybeef.com.

By Toni Riley
Field Reporter

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Exploring Tech Opportunities in Kentucky Agriculture

In the heart of Kentucky, where verdant fields stretch as far as the eye can see, a quiet revolution is unfolding. Once dominated by manual labor and basic machinery, the traditional agriculture sector is increasingly embracing technology. And with this shift, the demand for tech-savvy professionals in agriculture is growing exponentially.

One of the most exciting areas where technology and agriculture intersect is precision agriculture. This field is all about optimizing farming practices using technology. Precision agriculture professionals in Kentucky employ a suite of high-tech tools such as drones, satellite imagery, GPS technology, and Artificial Intelligence (AI) to monitor and manage crops. They use these technologies to boost productivity, minimize waste, reduce environmental impact, and ultimately make farming more profitable.

Data science is another rapidly expanding field in Kentucky's agriculture sector. Today, farming generates an enormous amount of data - from soil conditions and weather patterns to crop yield and livestock health. Data scientists in agriculture, often called agri-data scientists, mine this wealth of information to provide actionable insights. They design predictive models, develop algorithms, and leverage machine learning to help farmers make informed decisions.

Software development is yet another booming tech career in Kentucky agriculture. As the industry becomes more technologically advanced, the need for customized software solutions is escalating. Agricultural software developers in Kentucky create applications for farm management, livestock tracking, crop modeling, and more. These tools empower farmers to manage their operations more efficiently and make data-driven decisions.

At the intersection of biology and technology, bioinformatics careers are



In the basement of an engineering building on the University of Kentucky's campus, there's a calf replica who goes by the name of Chuck. Chuck has been instrumental in perfecting machine-learning and UAV formation control technology. Photo by: Eric Sanders.

taking root in Kentucky's agriculture sector. Bioinformaticians analyze complex biological data, such as genomic sequences of crops or pests. They use their expertise to develop improved crop varieties, design effective pest control strategies, and unravel the mysteries of plant diseases.

Furthermore, the role of cybersecurity in agriculture cannot be overstated. With the increasing use of technology in farming, protecting sensitive agricultural data from cyber threats is critical. Cybersecurity professionals in Kentucky's agriculture sector work tirelessly to safeguard farming data and

infrastructure, playing a vital role in the industry's tech revolution.

Kentucky's fusion of technology and agriculture is creating many exciting career opportunities. These tech careers are shaping the future of agriculture and contributing significantly to the global movement toward smarter, more sustainable farming. For tech enthusiasts with a passion for agriculture, there has never been a better time to start thinking about a career in the Bluegrass State.

Article provided by Kentucky Agriculture and Environment in the Classroom from www.kyfoodandfarm.info.



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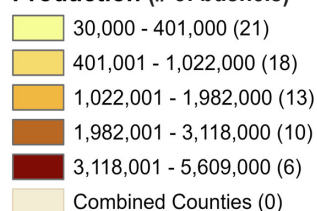
Animal Feed • Cleaning Products

Biodiesel • Lubricants • Ink • Tires

Cooking Oil • Health and Beauty Aids • Shoe Soles

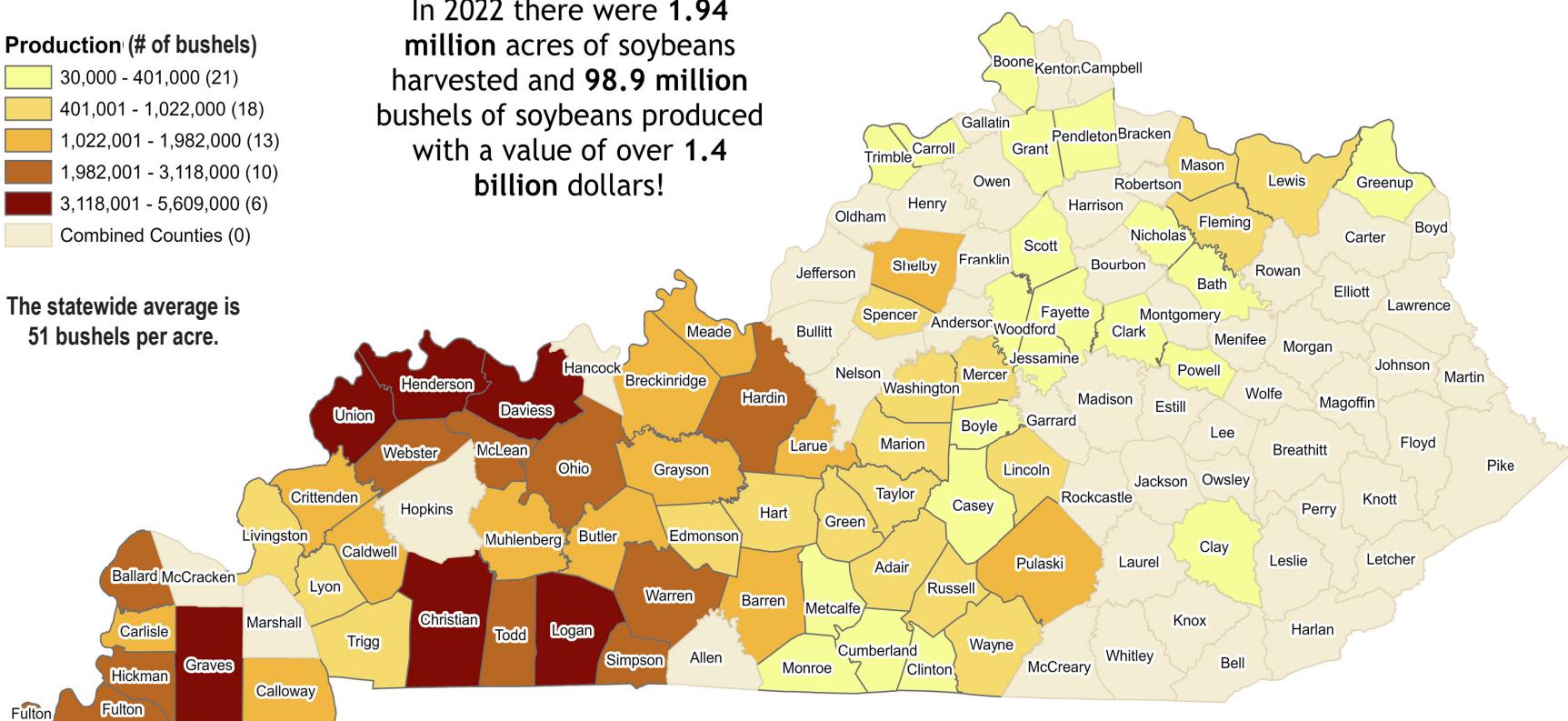
2022 Economic Impact of Soybean Agriculture

Production (# of bushels)



The statewide average is
51 bushels per acre.

In 2022 there were **1.94 million** acres of soybeans harvested and **98.9 million** bushels of soybeans produced with a value of over **1.4 billion** dollars!



Soybeans MEAN JOBS!

The annual contribution of the production of soybeans on the State's economy included more than **6,993** jobs, **\$1.47 billion** in Output (value of goods and services), and **\$1.04 billion** in GDP (value-added).



Soybean Board ✓

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Corn growers are heard through farm bill hearings

*By Tom Haag, President
National Corn Growers Association*

the House Agriculture General Farm Commodities, Risk Management, and Credit Subcommittee. Less than a week later, NCGA's First Vice President Harold Wolle also shared corn grower views on the farm safety net as he testified in front of the Senate Agriculture Subcommittee on Commodities, Risk Management, and Trade.

Harold and I urged members of the Ag Committees and Congress to:

- Protect federal crop insurance;
- Strengthen the producer safety net;
- Bolster U.S. international market development efforts; and
- Support voluntary conservation programs.

When I was asked about the potential impact should cuts be made to crop insurance, I expressed what a major disaster that would be for corn growers. Federal crop insurance has a proven track record of

helping producers quickly respond to natural disasters. And that's why NCGA broadly supports increasing its affordability.

I also made recommendations for improving the Commodity Title, including the Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage programs. NCGA supports continuing and improving both programs, which provide eligible growers protection during times of decreased revenue or prices. Our farm bill recommendations seek to make these USDA programs more effective and responsive through strategic investments and policy enhancements.

I also had an opportunity to mention the need to expand international markets by investing in trade promotion programs included in the Trade Title of the bill that boost U.S. agricultural exports and help agriculture and related businesses in rural America. Additionally, I touched on how NCGA supports multiple initia-

tives in the Conservation Title to make the existing working land conservation programs more effective.

After the Hearing

Our work does not stop at the end of these hearings. While in D.C., I met with Rep. Angie Craig (D-Minn.) and had meetings with leaders at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, including the administrator of the Farm Service Agency, to share the perspective of corn growers.

It was an honor to testify on behalf of NCGA and corn farmers throughout the country. My goal was to let my voice echo those who could not be there and represent those who work so hard for America's crop. I know many corn growers are participating in congressional farm bill listening sessions, roundtables, and meetings with their respective members of Congress. As the debate on the farm bill continues, our efforts will only intensify. Stay tuned!

Spring is proving to be a busy time between corn planting and grower leaders taking full advantage of every opportunity to talk about our priorities for the farm bill.

The farm bill, which governs many of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's agricultural and food programs, is set to expire at the end of September 2023, providing policymakers with an opportunity to review and update existing programs.

NCGA, corn state associations and grower members are working closely with policymakers to ensure the bill addresses the current and future needs of corn growers.

Farm Bill Priorities

When I was recently invited to testify about producer perspectives on the farm bill, I was happy to fly to Washington, D.C., and speak before

Congratulations, Scholarship Recipients

KyCorn is proud to announce the recipients of the 2023 scholarship program, which is funded through grower leader contributions.

For eligibility, students must be a child of an association member and attend an accredited Kentucky institution to study agriculture or a related field.

High School students entering college are awarded \$1,000 each, and current college student recipients receive a \$2,000 award, named in honor of the late Jim Barton.



Riley Hudnall, of Bowling Green, was awarded the \$2,000 Jim Barton Memorial Scholarship and earned a National Corn Growers Scholarship. Riley is studying agricultural business at Murray State University, and her goal is to work with and educate other agriculturalists like herself.



Miranda Cornett, of London, KY, was awarded a \$1,000 scholarship. Miranda is graduating from North Laurel High School and will start her Agriculture Economics studies at Somerset Community College. She plans to continue being part of and growing her family's farm market.



Rivers Gilkison, of Winchester, was awarded a \$1,000 scholarship. Rivers plans to study Agricultural Economics at the University of Kentucky and has ambitions of being a farm product entrepreneur. Her passions have been playing soccer and helping out on her family's farm.