

FALL 2005

# SMALL FARM QUARTERLY

Good Living and Good Farming that Connect Land, People, and Communities



Photo by Sergio Pinera

## Feature Articles

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# SMALL FARM QUARTERLY - Fall 2005

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## SMALL FARM QUARTERLY

### Good Farming and Good Living — Connecting People, Land, and Communities

Small Farm Quarterly is for farmers and farm families — including spouses and children - who value the quality of life that smaller farms provide.

#### OUR GOALS ARE TO:

- Celebrate the Northeast region's smaller farms;
- Inspire and inform farm families and their supporters;
- Help farmers share expertise and opinions with each other; and
- Increase awareness of the benefits that small farms contribute to society and the environment.
- Share important research, extension, and other resources.

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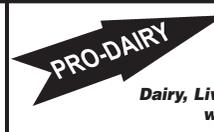
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## FROM THE EDITORS

### Dig Deep for Those in Need

By Anu Rangarajan

I have always been grateful for my home and small farm in upstate NY, but especially so now. The disaster that has unfolded after Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast in September will continue to haunt families in the region for years to come. The images haunt me, and I only watch from afar.

While the recovery process has been grizzly, it is only beginning. An entire economy has been destroyed.

The impact of Katrina on family farms and rural people in the region has been fairly invisible in the media. Many of these farms have sustained damage to farm buildings and infrastructure and lost markets due to the devastation along the Gulf Coast. Yet there are several groups doing important

and amazing work to help these folks pick up the pieces and move on. Here, I want to share some information with you on how you can help these farmers and rural people rebuild. The information below is from Kathy Ozer of the National Family Farm Coalition:

The Federation of Southern Cooperatives is leading many recovery efforts. They are based in Atlanta and have a training center in Epes, Alabama and extensive farmer controlled farmer marketing coops, credit unions, and housing coops in Southern Alabama and Mississippi - regions both heavily hit by Katrina. The Federation is offering direct financial and technical assistance and support to member families in the region with support from partnering agencies like Oxfam America, Farm-Aid,

Cooperative Development Foundation, Southern Partners Fund, Bert and Mary Meyer Foundation, Sharing Inc., and others. They are helping families register with the Red Cross and FEMA for more short and long term assistance but these agencies are moving slowly and cautiously in the face of great needs and remote rural conditions. They are hosting a camp in Alabama which is housing 10,000 people.

Over time the Federation would like to institute more long term recovery efforts employing self-help cooperative principles including developing housing cooperatives, self-help housing, worker owned cooperative clean-up, rehab and construction crews, as well as ongoing work with farmers cooperatives and credit unions.

Please consider sending a donation to: **Federation of Southern Cooperatives**, 2769 Church Street, East Point, GA 30344. [www.federation.coop](http://www.federation.coop), and/or to any of the following organizations that are working to

support Gulf Coast farmers: **Farm Aid Disaster Fund.** Farm Aid has already donated \$15,000 for supplies for a camp in Alabama, a special grant to Farmers Legal Action Group for hurricane disaster response and to the Louisiana Inter-church Conference. [www.farmaid.org/](http://www.farmaid.org/).

**National Family Farm Coalition.** 110 Maryland Ave..N.E, Suite 307; Washington, D.C. 20002—NFFC has re-activated its Credit Task Force and will be working to make sure that the federal disaster assistance meets the needs of family farmers - and push for legislative fixes to existing programs. [www.nffc.net](http://www.nffc.net)

**Oxfam America.** NFFC and the Federation have worked with Oxfam for many years and they support our domestic policy work. They have also already donated \$25,000 to the Federation for the Alabama camp. See [www.oxfamamerica.org/](http://www.oxfamamerica.org/) for an update on their efforts in response to Katrina.

## SMALL FARMS PROGRAM UPDATE - FALL

As usual, it seems that the summer has flown by. Somehow it was still a very productive season for the Small Farms Program. Here are some of the highlights:

### CHECK OUT OUR NEW AND IMPROVED WEBSITE!

One of our summer projects was the complete overhaul of the Cornell Small Farms Website, [www.smallfarms.cornell.edu](http://www.smallfarms.cornell.edu). The new design makes it easier -- we hope -- to find the information you're looking for and makes our program activities more visible. We also think it looks very, very cool!!!!

Many thanks to our talented student webmaster Tyler Garzo. Tyler not only provided an amazing level of technical expertise to the project, but turned out to be a great graphic designer as well.

We hope you will take a good look at the site and tell us what you think, using the online feedback form. Improving the site is a never-ending process, so don't be afraid to make suggestions and let us know how we can make it easier to find what you're looking for.

### FACILITATION SKILLS TRAINING A HUGE SUCCESS – MORE TO COME

Skilled facilitation can help groups of all types improve their ability to work effectively together and achieve their goals. The almost overwhelming response to our September 14 Facilitation Skills Training showed us that the demand for this kind of training is hot!

By partnering with Cornell's Community, Food and Agriculture Program, Community and Rural Development Institute, Community Food Systems Program, Farmers Market Nutrition Program, and Agricultural Community and Economic Development Program Work Team, we were able to engage a large and diverse group, folks who work not only with farmers but with non-profit organizations, consumer groups, agriculture development teams, Farmland Protection Boards, multi-agency groups, and other groups involved in food system change.

We exceeded our planned maximum of 50 registrants, but managed to provide everybody with hands on experience facilitating group discussion. Trainers Laura Branca and Kirby Edmonds of Training for Change

Associates did an outstanding job, and evaluations were extremely positive. We plan to continue this partnership effort and will be offering additional training opportunities throughout the year. Thanks to our partners, to TFC Associates, and to the Northeast SARE Professional Development Program for helping make this workshop such a resounding success.

### SMALL FARM GRANTS PROGRAM

Our mini-grants program supports Extension educators in developing educational projects that specifically target and engage local small farm businesses. All 2004-5 grants projects were completed by the end of September. Grants projects for 2005-6 will focus on three themes:

- 1) developing farmer - to - farmer discussion groups or mentoring programs.
- 2) developing farmer group initiatives (e.g. marketing, purchasing, new ventures)
- 3) producing fact sheets for the small farm audience.

Proposals are due October 15 and will be reviewed by a committee of farmers. You can find reports on previous year's projects at [www.smallfarms.cornell.edu](http://www.smallfarms.cornell.edu). Look under "Projects."

### NEW LIVESTOCK FACT SHEETS NOW ONLINE

Through a grant from the Small Farms Program, a series of fact sheets on minor livestock species was completed this summer by Martha Wright in Cornell's Animal Science Department. The series includes Lamb, Meat Goats, Grass Fed Beef, Cervids (deer, elk), Pasture Pigs, Pasture Poultry, and Meat Rabbits. You can view and download the fact sheets at [www.smallfarms.cornell.edu](http://www.smallfarms.cornell.edu).

### RESEARCH PROJECTS

September marked the launch of a new collaborative research project exploring the potential of "industry clusters" to foster successful small and mid-sized farm businesses. We also continue to collaborate on the Small and Mid-Sized Dairy Farm Viability Study. And we are waiting to hear about proposals for an Organic Agriculture Innovation Center, and a Small and Mid-Sized Dairy Extension Project.

To find out more about our program activities, visit [www.smallfarms.cornell.edu](http://www.smallfarms.cornell.edu). Click on "Projects."

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## READERS WRITE

### KUDOS FOR SFQ

Joanna,

Just a quick note to tell you how impressed I was with the newest (Summer 05) edition of Small Farm Quarterly... It was extraordinarily well-done and shows a lot of care and thought. Nice job!

Alan Knight  
New York Farm Bureau

### BEE STINGS FOR ARTHRITIS

Dear Bill (Henning)

I would like to make a comment on one of your articles. It was in the latest (Summer 05) Small Farm Quarterly. In the article you talked about steps to relieve arthritis. I am a former nurse and had noticed over the years how badly affected some farmers

were with arthritis. Visually with deformed knuckles especially. I always wondered if it had something to do with handling milk or just having to be out in a cold and often times damp barn milking cows.

I have had sheep (100+) for 30 years and I sheared over 3000 sheep per year. About 1998 the joint pains got to be too much and I had to think about ending all my farming activities. Then by chance we saw a documentary on the use of bee venom on the relief of arthritis. In June of 1998 we got a couple hives. It took quite a number of stings the first year but now I seldom have any pain. The deformities in my fingers are gone too. I only have the occasional stings now when working with our hives. There is a saying that "Beekeepers don't get Arthritis nor do they get Cancer". Something to ponder.

Sandy von Allmen

## We Want to Hear from You!

We welcome letters to the editor -- Please write to us!  
Or send a question and we'll do our best to answer it.  
We're also looking for beautiful, interesting, and/or funny small farm photos to print.

Write or email Joanna Green, Cornell Small Farms Program, 162 Morrison Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853, [jg16@cornell.edu](mailto:jg16@cornell.edu).

**MANAGING RISK****Rein in Risk on Your Farm**

**As the proverb says:  
Diligence is the mother  
of good fortune.**

By Martha Goodsell

*Editor's note: This overview is the first of a series of articles focusing on risk management funded by the New York Crop Insurance Education Program under the Risk Management Agency (USDA) and the NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets. In future issues, we will feature profiles of how a variety of farmers cope with risk, and report on a crop insurance program designed specifically to help meet the needs of small, diversified farms.*

I'm a great believer in Murphy's Law and its correlates: If anything can go wrong it will — and it will be the one thing you didn't plan for as well as the one that does the most damage. Farming is full of risks — weather woes, pest- and disease-threats, equipment breakdowns, injuries, plunging markets and more. But Murphy doesn't always have to prevail.

Fortunately, you can identify risks that threaten your farm and plan ways to minimize their effects on you, your family and your business. That's essentially what risk management is — the process of gaining greater control over the decisions you make (or confronting those you avoid making) and weighing the tradeoffs, returns and consequences of those decisions.

Because we have retail sales, farm tours and recreational activities on our farm, we're really exposing ourselves to a substantial amount of risk. So our risk management plan helps us focus not only on production risks, but all the risks. From a curious pony nibbling a finger to the potential loss of our deer-meat market due to consumer fears about chronic wasting disease, we try to stay ahead of what Murphy might throw at us.

Some people think that risk management is just about purchasing crop insurance. But crop insurance is just one risk-reduction tool that makes sense for some farmers. For others, time and effort is better spent examining and addressing a much broader range of risks.

This is especially true for small farms. While no two are alike, many share some characteristics that make risk management particularly challenging. For example, limited credit and capital leave a scant margin for error, or force you to put off purchases that could reduce risks in the long run, such as replacing old, unsafe equipment or buying health insurance. The small workforce — often limited just to family members — is vulnerable to disruption. And with everyone just trying to keep up with day-to-day demands, there's often little time left-over to keep good records, follow markets, or even develop a risk-management plan.

But a plan is exactly what you need to protect your farm. You can call on professionals to help you work through the process. (See Resource Spotlight.) Or you can start by simply reading on and using this article as a springboard for discussions with your family members.

Here are the four steps you need to take to reduce risk on your farm:

1. Know your own attitude toward risk. (See Sidebar, What's Your Risk Tolerance?)
2. Understand the five different types of risk you face.
3. Develop and implement your own risk management plan.
4. Develop contingency plans for when things still go wrong.

**PRODUCTION RISKS**

Production risks include weather (droughts, floods, freezes, etc.), pests and diseases, equipment failure and anything else that reduces your harvest or its quality.

Good agricultural practices, such as IPM, nutrient management, intensive grazing and a herd health plan, reduce production risks. Take care of the basics: Maintain fences, facilities and equipment, and store feeds, medicine, and chemicals properly.

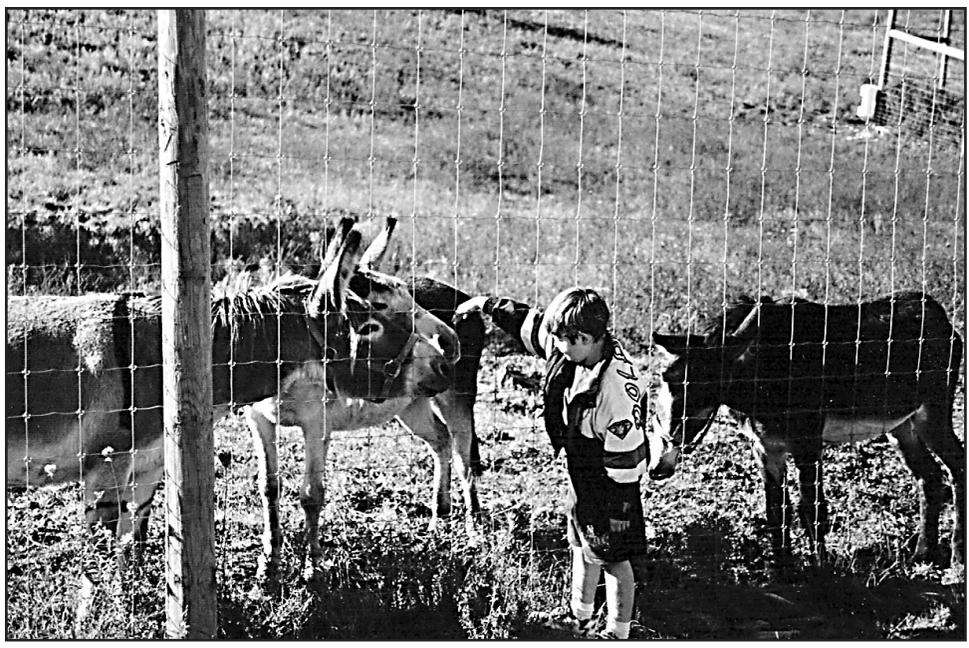


When it comes to managing risks on her family's 425-acre, grass-based farm, Martha Goodsell believes in taking Murphy's laws head on. Photo by Ben Goodsell

Invest in risk-reducing technology, such as irrigation in drought-prone areas. Investing in equipment matched to the task can reduce breakdowns, downtime and personal injuries while making sure that jobs get done in a timely fashion.

Diversification is one way you can reduce production risks. You can add new crops, grow several varieties of one crop, or integrate livestock into your operation. One practice that reduces both marketing and production risks in livestock operations is to sell at various stages in the growth cycle, for example hot house lambs, market lambs and breeding stock. One caveat: Diversification has its own set of risks. Without careful business planning, it can increase risks, rather than reduce them.

Crop insurance can protect against production and, in some cases, market risks. As government price support payments and payouts in years of crop disasters dry up, crop insurance has become more important for ensuring a reliable cash flow. "Catastrophic Coverage" (CAT) and "Non-Insured Disaster Assistance" (NAP) are affordable ways to provide some help in case of serious crop failures. Whether or not additional coverage works for you takes some pencil-pushing. A relatively new crop insurance program, AGR-Lite, may better meet the



With on-farm retail sales and tours, the Goodsells need to cope with risks that range from product liability to curious livestock nibbling on visitors' fingers. Photo by Martha Goodsell

needs of small farmers than traditional crop insurance programs. (See sidebar, Insure your revenue instead of your crop.)

**MARKET RISKS**

Market risks kick in when you convert your harvest into cash. If you sell commodities, global factors beyond your control, including increasing competition, fluctuating exchange rates, new trade agreements, and buyer consolidation all increase your risk. Even if you rely more on direct marketing, other unpredictable factors — bad weather or road construction keeping customers away for example — can hurt your sales.

**What's Your Risk Tolerance?**

Even before you start looking at the risks you face, it's important that you know your own attitudes toward risk. Which best describes you?

- **Risk avoiders** are cautious and do not like to take chances.
- **Calculators** are willing to take calculated risks but only after gathering and reviewing information, playing out scenarios, and figuring the probabilities and payoffs.
- **Adventurers** like the thrill and excitement associated with risk, but will only do so if they believe there is a possibility of being successful, even if the odds are not in their favor.
- **Daredevils** take unnecessary chances and often fail, having ignored facts and refusing to take precautions.

It's also important to realize that you and other members of your family may have different attitudes about risk. Recognizing that fact will help reduce stress as you work out your plan. (See Resource Spotlight for information about an online test, How Risk Tolerant Are You?)

Develop and follow a marketing plan regardless of what market you use.

Diversification works as well for marketing as it does for production, if it's well planned. Consider multiple markets, such as food brokering, wholesaling, on-farm retail sales, direct sales to restaurants or schools, or farmers market vending.

Cooperatives allow risk and rewards to be spread over the membership. Cooperatives can help reduce costs, enhance prices, provide access to new markets or improve bargaining strength.

Consider using contracts or professional help. Futures brokers, financial planners and farm consultants can help with hedging, forwarded or deferred contracts or contracted production if you're uncomfortable with these.

Keep up to date on consumer trends, market conditions, government regulations, trade policies, and industry news.

**PEOPLE RISKS**

Small farms are particularly vulnerable to people risks because they usually rely on a very limited labor pool. Obviously, death or divorce can be catastrophic. But even a short-term disability or a family dispute can wreak havoc on a small farm.

Maintaining a safe work environment and investing in health, disability and long-term care insurance can help reduce people risks, as can maintaining good relationships within your family and with employees, neighbors and other people on and off the farm.

**FINANCIAL RISKS**

Financial risks relate to the ability to pay the farm's financial obligations in a timely manner. Interest rates and inflation impact financial risk.

Good recordkeeping is key to providing a history of where you've been as well as helping to map out future decisions. Records provide the information you need to manage financial risk.

**LEGAL RISKS**

Legal risks include the possibility of being sued, fined or otherwise penalized. Sure, you never intend any wrongdoing. But if a customer gets hurt on your property or by your product, or you contaminate a waterway, then you've got legal problems.

Liability insurance (possibly including product liability and/or personal injury riders) and structuring your farm business appropriately are ways of reducing legal risks. Consult legal, business and/or insurance professionals to help you cope with legal risks you identify on your farm.

**WRITE AND IMPLEMENT YOUR PLAN**

As you've read about the types of risks, you've probably nodded your head and

*Continued on next page*

**FARM FOLLIES****Good Day - Bad Day**

By Barbara Brock Carney

The day before deer season I got out all of my clothes, gun, shells, tag, and other equipment. Morning came with me getting very little sleep. I'm real tired, but I was up at 5:00 AM and ready to go.

Now I'm dressed, have all my equipment, and am out the door. When almost to the garage – Oh no! I forgot my hat. I can't go hunting without my bright orange hat. So I go back in to get Jerry up so he can move his car so I can get my orange hat.

OK! I've got my hat now and Jerry goes back to bed.

I go hunting, maybe a mile down the road. I park the car and get all my things out, hide the car keys and shut the door. You guessed it – I'm locked out of the car. I say okay, I have my gun, the heck with the car

I'm going hunting. I walk up the road and through the woods to my tree stand.

Here I am at the tree stand Jerry fixed for me, with the new steps and the roof on it to keep me dry. Nice huh? Now I go up the steps and oh did they creek. So loud that I thought they would scare all the deer away. I'm about four steps up and then go down one. Thinking I could trip on the way down, I continue to the top where I ram my gun into the roof – noise again. I sit down and check my gun out. I decide it isn't hurt and everything's okay.

It's a nice morning. I get to the tree stand by 5:30 and sit until around 7:30 when here comes a deer. I pull up my gun and swing it around to the right of me, where the deer is. It hits the post that holds up the roof. With the post being so close I pull the gun back around the post. The deer decides to go the other way. I pull the gun back

around the post again. Then the deer goes the other way so I, again, pull the gun back around the post. At least three times I had to duck around that post, ever so slowly so the deer wouldn't see me.

Now I shoot, hitting the doe, which starts to get back up. I don't want the deer to get away so I stand up quick and hit my head, real hard, on the new roof. I hit my head so hard that I fall back into my stool. I break the seat. When I break the seat I fall backward and now I'm stuck between the stool and the tree. My knees are up in the air along with my gun and I can't move.

Then I worry about loosing the deer. The doe had stayed there. Seven other deer run by her and I can't move. I look on the other side of me and there are seven more deer running along the creek and I still can't move with my fanny stuck in a tree stand. When I finally do untangle myself I see the deer I'd shot had died.

I only got to shoot once and there had been 14 deer running all around me, proba-

bly laughing at me and my tree stand. I'm bent over laughing and can't shoot that way either since it gives me a headache. So much for a roof on a tree stand.

Final note: I did get two deer this year, not bad for a 66-year-old lady who's still hunting.

**Barbara Brock Carney lives -- and hunts -- in rural Livingston County, NY.**

**Continued from prev. page**

said to yourself, "That could be a problem for us, too." The next step is to make a list of those risks and ideas for reducing them. It doesn't have to be comprehensive at this point. But keep it someplace handy where you can revisit it to add potential risks and solutions and check off risks you've addressed.

As you transform your plan into action, keep the following in mind:

Think safety first. If something needs to be picked up, removed or fixed or signage posted, then just do it. Don't procrastinate especially if someone could get hurt.

Use good agricultural practices. They can reduce risk while improving profitability – and they may aid your defense if someone sues you.

Use the Murphy's Law approach. Look around your farm and ask yourself what could possibly go wrong at any location or during any task. Make a list of things to fix, change or do.

Set priorities. Weigh probabilities and consequences. Deal first with those risks that are most likely to happen and would have the greatest impact on your farm business.

Pick the low-hanging fruit. There are probably some risks on your list that you can address now, without any outside help.

Develop a safety net. Build a strong network among neighbors and others who can help out if needed. If there were an emergency, who could you get to help feed or milk the animals? Who would help with the harvest? Tell them about your risk-manage-

ment plan and offer to be part of theirs.

Consult professionals. While the most important person in your risk-management plan is you, there are some risks that may require professional help. When needed, don't be afraid to consult professionals, such as attorneys, insurance agents, financial advisors or tax consultants. Find some you trust and are comfortable working with. (See Resource Spotlight.)

**CONTINGENCY PLANNING**

It's impossible to eliminate all risks. Even with the best of plans, emergencies happen. What are you going to do when equipment fails, something goes wrong, or someone gets hurt? Post emergency phone numbers so they're available in the event of an injury or other crisis. Have evacuation plans for fire or natural disaster. Should key equipment break down, make sure that you have product service information where it can be found quickly.

Many proverbs provide us with good strategies for coping with risk: Don't put all your eggs in one basket. A stitch in time saves nine. Better safe than sorry. But perhaps the wisest is, Never put off until tomorrow what you can do today. When it comes to planning for how you manage risk, you can't afford to wait.

**Martha Goodsell raises 1,700 deer and other livestock with the help of her husband and four children on a 425-acre, grass-based farm in Candor, N.Y. She is also the Executive Director of NY Farms!, a statewide coalition of organizations, individuals, businesses, agencies and institutions committed to the future of New York's farms and families.**

## Resource Spotlight

### Risk Management Resources

Risk Management for Horticultural Crops – Cornell Department of Applied Economics and Management website includes newsletter articles, case studies and other resources, including a self-test *How Risk Tolerant Are You?*

[hortmgt.aem.cornell.edu/programs/riskmgt.htm](http://hortmgt.aem.cornell.edu/programs/riskmgt.htm). Contact your local Cooperative Extension office or visit your local library if you lack Internet access.

NYFarmNet – Cornell program offers free and confidential on-farm consultation on risk management and other business, financial, family and personal topics. Especially recommended are their publications *Using Crop Insurance: Profiles of 13 Farmers Who Use Crop Insurance as a Risk Management Tool* and its companion workbook *Do I Need Crop Insurance? Self-Evaluating Crop Insurance as a Risk Management Tool in New York State*. Free to New York farmers. Phone: 800-547-3276. Visit NYFarmNet's website at: [www.nyfarmnet.org](http://www.nyfarmnet.org).

Cooperative Extension – Your local office should be able to put you in touch with professionals who can help you develop a risk management plan for your farm.

New York State Crop Insurance Education Program (CIE) – Provides NY farmers with practical, timely, authoritative information to help them integrate crop insurance into their risk management planning. Look for CIE-sponsored events on the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets crop insurance calendar ([www.agmkt.state.ny.us/cropins.html](http://www.agmkt.state.ny.us/cropins.html)) or the NY Farms! calendar ([www.nyfarms.info/calendar.html](http://www.nyfarms.info/calendar.html)). For more information, contact Christopher Reed, CIE program manager: (518) 672-7743 or [chr@capital.net](mailto:chr@capital.net).

Other states have similar programs. Here are key contacts:

Connecticut: Norman Bender, University of Connecticut, 860-885-2827, [norman.bender@uconn.edu](mailto:norman.bender@uconn.edu).

Massachusetts: Rick Chandler, Mass. Department of Agricultural Resources 413-577-0459, [rchandler@umext.umass.edu](mailto:rchandler@umext.umass.edu); Kathy Ruhf, Northeast Sustainable Agricul-

## Insure Your Revenue Instead of Your Crop

If you've found that most traditional crop insurance programs don't fit your farming operation, there is a relatively new program that might help you defray both production and marketing risks.

Instead of insuring individual crops, the Adjusted Gross Revenue-Lite program (AGR-Lite) provides whole-farm revenue protection against both natural disasters (such as drought or flood), as well as market fluctuations. It covers crops that are otherwise difficult or impossible to insure (such as forage, fruit and vegetables), as well as revenue from animals and animal products.

AGR-Lite rewards diversification by providing better coverage and lower premiums for farms that produce two or more crops. If your farm business is susceptible to revenue fluctuations from year to year due to volatile markets, this might be the insurance product for you.

To improve the program for 2006, the USDA Risk Management Agency recently increased the maximum liability from \$250,000 to \$1 million and extended the closing date to March 15. That should give you with plenty of time this winter to investigate whether or not AGR-Lite will work for you.

We'll take a detailed look at AGR-Lite in our Winter 2006 issue, and point you toward informational meetings and other resources that will help you make your decision.

ture Working Group 413-323-9878  
[kzruhf@verizon.net](mailto:kzruhf@verizon.net).

Pennsylvania: Gene Gantz, USDA Risk Management Agency, 717-497-6398, [gantz@pa.net](mailto:gantz@pa.net), Kyle Nagurny, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, 717-772-3094, [knagurny@state.pa.us](mailto:knagurny@state.pa.us).

New Jersey: Sharon Kinsey, N.J. Department of Agriculture, 609-984-1966, [agmkins@ag.state.nj.us](mailto:agmkins@ag.state.nj.us).

Or check with your local Cooperative Extension or FSA office.

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**MARKETING****From Farm to Table: Elderberry Farm and Restaurant**

By Lael Gerhart

The Elderberry Pond Farm outside of Auburn, NY puts new meaning into the idea of a diversified farm. Set on 100 acres of organic farmland, Lou and Merby Lego have over 30 acres in cultivation. Elderberry Pond is home to an impressive orchard with over a hundred varieties of apples, unique varieties of pears, as well as plums, peaches, and cherries.

Vegetables also abound. The Legos specialize in growing Heirloom varieties among them potatoes, tomatoes, beets, squash, and green beans. What makes Elderberry Pond unique is that the crops are not the only things that have been diversified, the farm business has moved from direct marketing sales in their farm store and the Auburn farmers' market, to encompass the creation of its very own restaurant – The Restaurant at Elderberry Pond.

The idea to open the restaurant grew out of the small store they started on the farm about 18 years ago. In the store they featured their raw produce as well as prepared food such as soups, salads, jams, and fruit pies – all made from their own harvests. The Legos found that although they had steady sales of their raw produce, both at the farmers' market and at their farm store, it was the prepared food that really sold. People told the Legos, "You know you should really do this as a restaurant."

At that time Lou and Merby were both working off farm jobs and were looking for a way to get more value out of their farm. A restaurant was always something they wanted to do, and since their son Chris had recently graduated from the Culinary Institute, they thought a farm restaurant could be a wonderful way to add to their farm income.

In 2004 Elderberry Pond received a Value-Added Agricultural Product Market Development Grant (VAPG) from the USDA's Rural Development program to help establish the on-farm restaurant, which features fresh organic food produced on the farm as well as products from other regional producers. The Legos are staunch advocates of the sustainable agricultural movement and feel the restaurant is one way to help revive a local and regional farm economy.

The produce the restaurant uses is grown on the farm, but many of the products that are not available on farm are sourced through other regional producers. Elderberry Pond purchases their ground beef from a farm in Weed-sport and their poultry from a farm in Pennsylvania.

"What we are trying to do," Lou Lego explains, "is say that there is a better system of farming in the United States. It involves, not monocropping on huge centrally located farms where the whole issue becomes transportation and storage and distribution, but getting back to smaller local farms that produce stuff that people can use locally. [Then] you are supporting a local agricultural economy."

The Legos also see the restaurant as a way to educate the greater public about local food systems. They report that, "A lot of the people that come to the restaurant came to buy produce [at the store] and they all believe in organic farming. That is why they come; they want the quality and the lack of pesticides. But there is a whole other set of people who would never come to the farm to buy produce but they come to the restaurant."

According to the Legos the restaurant makes it easy to increase public awareness on the benefits of eating locally. Diners frequently exclaim, "These potatoes are unbelievable! How did you get them to taste like that?" The wait staff, many of whom work harvesting on the farm in the morning, reply, "Well, they were just dug, they are fresh from the ground, they haven't been stored."

Many restaurants are interested or are already purchasing products directly from farms because they know the quality is superior, and

their customers can taste the difference. Elderberry Pond is a member of Finger Lakes Culinary Bounty, a collective of farmers, restaurants, wineries, and food producers whose mission is to make the Finger Lakes renowned for its unique regional cuisine, a cuisine based on fresh, seasonal locally grown and made ingredients, paired with the region's fine wines, contributing to the well being of the region's farms, food producers, wineries, businesses and communities.

Starting a farm restaurant may not be for everyone, but selling directly to restaurants holds potential for farmers to gain extra farm income and increase public demand for local foods.

For more information on restaurants interested in purchasing local products and to learn more about Finger Lakes Culinary Bounty visit [www.fingerlakesculinarybounty.org](http://www.fingerlakesculinarybounty.org). To delight in a gourmet meal featuring farm fresh products visit The Restaurant at Elderberry Pond call 315-252-6025 for directions and reservations.

**Lael Gerhart is the Local Food Promotion Coordinator with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County and serves as staff to support to the Finger Lakes Culinary Bounty Program. She can be reached at 607-272-2292.**



The restaurant attracts many customers who wouldn't otherwise come out to the farm.



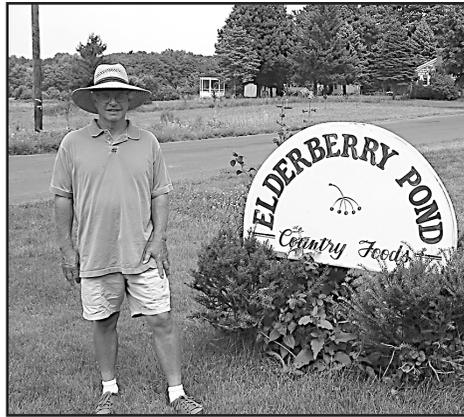
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Many restaurants are interested or are already purchasing products directly from farms because they know the quality is superior, and



The Legos see their restaurant as a way to educate the public about local food systems, as well as a profit center. All photos by Matthew Cogger



A high tunnel provides greens for the restaurant, even through the winter.



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**GRAZING**

# Water – A Key Component of Managed Grazing

By Bill Henning

There are very few, if any, management practices available today that offer as many benefits to the livestock producer as Management Intensive Grazing. Not the least important of those benefits are the environmental aspects. Interestingly, this phenomenon is so mutualistic that what is good for the environment is also good for grazing. Perhaps the most important centerpiece of this relationship is the proper distribution of quality water.

Research tells us that cattle prefer to drink fresh water from a spring 92% of the time as compared to drinking from a stream, which they'll choose only eight percent of the time. When we keep cattle from drinking from a stream we also reduce fecal streptococci bacteria in the water by 77%, nitrogen by 54%, phosphorus by 81% and total suspended solids by 90%. Silting of ponds can also be significantly reduced when cattle are fenced out.

Water distribution can also affect grazing behavior. When traveling distance to the water source exceeds 900 feet we can expect to see grazed forage intake

decreasing with a concurrent decrease in meat or milk production. In a Missouri trial 160 acres of pasture only produced the consumed forage equivalent of 130 acres when the cattle had to travel over 1300 feet to their water source.

Topography also plays a role in water placement and grazing efficiency. In extremely hilly areas the extra effort required to obtain water will tend to keep cattle closer to the source, leaving areas farther away completely ungrazed. Thus topography can amplify the effects of poor water placement.

Grazing efficiency can also be affected, via water consumption, as a result of herding instincts. Cattle tend to herd. If they have to travel to water they tend to go as a group. If cattle access to the water is limited the timid cattle will hold back. When the aggressive animals have had their fill, should they start to leave, there is a likelihood the rest will follow. This will cut short the drinking of some. The more timid might follow the group without drinking at all. As water consumption declines so does dry matter intake, and so does meat or milk production.

The greater the distance the water is from the grazing area the more serious this situation becomes. The solution lies in having an adequate supply of water available for the whole herd to drink simultaneously or provide for rapid refill within the grazing area.

Soil fertility is also affected by water placement. Grazing cattle return 79% of the N, 66% of the P, and 92% of the K eaten off the pasture directly back to the land. Strategic placement of water helps promote a more even distribution of these nutrients throughout the pasture. Keeping the water source within smaller paddocks not only promotes diffusion of manure and urine, it encourages more uniform grazing.

Water is our cheapest feed. Protecting it and using it wisely offers a very significant return on investment. Can we afford to not use it to our best advantage?



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**Bill Henning and his wife Kathleen operate a grass-based beef and sheep farm in the Finger Lakes region of New York. He is also the Small Farms Specialist with Pro-Dairy/CCE-NWNY Dairy, Livestock, and Field Crops Team.**

**MARKETING**

## Selling to Restaurants - Tips for Farmers/Processors

By Monika Roth

1) Selling to restaurants can provide additional marketing opportunities. Many restaurants will pay more for quality local products. Minimums of 10% over wholesale for standard items, and higher percentages for specialty items (those that can not be found wholesale), are typical.

2) Work your way into a restaurant by offering quality and/or hard to find items; then build up the order by educating chefs about what other products you can supply.

3) Establish a consistent price throughout the season rather than fluctuating up and down. This makes it easier for chefs to plan menus and pricing.

4) Provide chefs with a harvesting schedule so they can plan their menus around it.

5) Ask chefs questions about their expectations. Find out what and how much they need, how they want the produce/products to look like, and if packaging is desired.

6) Make personal contact with the owner, manager or chef.

7) In order to get your restaurant orders up to a level that justifies delivery time and costs, you need to sell a variety of products. Consider teaming with a neighbor farmer to offer a wider variety of products.

8) Calculate your delivery fee (time and gasoline) and include this on your invoice to the restaurant.

9) Set up an order schedule (standard day per week). DO NOT CALL during lunch (11 am-2 pm) or dinner (4 pm-11 pm).

10) Specify when orders must be placed so you have time to harvest products before

delivery. Make it clear that you need a certain number of hours or days notice for special orders.

11) Chefs often move from restaurant to restaurant, so center your business agreement on the restaurant and not the chef only.

12) Be on-time with your deliveries and supply exactly what you have promised. **RELIABILITY IS A MUST!**

13) Ask exactly when and where to deliver the products, and then follow-through. Your buyers appreciate efforts to place the products in the walk-in cooler, on shelf in the kitchen, etc. when delivered.

14) Help the restaurant communicate your local, homegrown quality to restaurant customers. You might want to provide farm literature or business cards for them to distribute to customers. Also, educate the restaurant staff about your products. When you make your delivery, make it a habit to speak with the waiters and waitresses as well as the chef. Offer to take them on a tour of your farm. Show them the freshness of your product and give them a sense of how things are grown or made.

15) Make sure that payment terms are clear; ask what the restaurant's normal billing schedule is. If you can live with that, accept it. Otherwise make separate arrangements!

**Monika Roth is Agriculture Development and Marketing Specialist with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County. She also serves as Secretary of the Finger Lakes Culinary Bounty, a collective of farmers, restaurants, wineries, and food producers whose mission is to make the Finger Lakes renowned for its unique regional cuisine.**



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**URBAN AGRICULTURE****Urban Oasis Psychiatric Center Farm Market**

**A "real-job" work experience uses horticultural therapy to bring local grown and upstate farm produce to a Brooklyn community**

By Linda Ameroso

There is a gazebo right inside the gate at Kingsboro Psychiatric Center. It is the home of this Brooklyn community's first Farmers' Market, and welcomes residents to step inside and experience a market sponsored by the NYS Office of Mental Health at Kingsboro Psychiatric Center. Urban Oasis, an affirmative horticultural business and agricultural initiative of Kingsboro Psychiatric Center has provided vocational training and improved employment opportunities through "real job" work experience for trainees since 1997.

Urban Oasis is under the auspices of the Rehabilitation Services Department, and in 2004 it expanded beyond a mini-farm and greenhouse operation by opening a NYS Farmers' Market where produce grown on-site is featured along side apples, pears, pumpkins and other produce supplied by David and Veronica Haughton, participating farmers from Trinity Farms in upstate NY.

State Farmers' Market Nutrition Checks are gladly accepted here, a plus for this community where two senior centers and major hospitals come together to provide needed medical services and community support facilities. Trainees sell their produce and tell customers how collards are grown, and tomatoes are picked and cleaned with genuine care. There is a sense of warmth and pride that goes along with selling, and you can buy not only produce, but houseplants and festive holiday gifts, specialties grown and arranged by these trained Urban Oasis employed participants.

Halloween was not only market time last season, but a time of entertainment, as this gazebo is in an open area large enough to host activities as well. Open only one day a week for 5 weeks last fall (2004), Urban Oasis grossed over \$1600. In 2005, their market has been open one day a week starting the end of June through October.

As a business run by a state facility, Urban Oasis works with partners at Cornell Cooperative Extension in NYC, which helps them to network more effectively and utilize their resources to support other food growing initiatives city-wide. For example Urban Oasis contracts with GreenThumb, a program of the City of New York/Parks and Recreation, to grow 150 - 250 flats of vegetable transplants a year. This arrangement supplies quality transplants to community gardeners all over the City.

From 2002 to 2004, 400 flats of vegetables were grown by program participants - that's \$4000 generated to offset salaries and supplies to run their business. In 2005 they have increased the yearly amount to 250 flats of varieties grown from organic seed and suited for NYC community gardens.

With help from Cornell Extension Educators, Urban Oasis has moved their minifarm operation toward sustainability, utilizing cover crops and row covers, practicing IPM, and composting onsite to build soil. They use mulch and wide rows for weed control, and drip irrigation to insure quality yields while conserving water. Manure is generously supplied by The Black Cowboys Association, who drop off truck loads when

needed because they believe in this farming effort.

Urban Oasis trainees help conduct onsite training workshops in production for other growers. This year Urban Oasis will benefit by receiving services from the Horticultural Society of NY through a \$35,000 grant of support from Vonamergin. Working together with Extension and other partners, vocational training program efforts will continue



David and Veronica Haughton from Trinity Farm in Clintondale, NY sell fruits and vegetables directly to the Brooklyn community at two NYC farmers' markets and also supply "Urban Oasis" with fresh NYS produce. Photographer: Alan Braverman



to extend horticultural opportunities at Kingsboro Psychiatric Center and in the community.

What do participants think of working in Urban Oasis? Adan, a past trainee says, "It is work I can really depend on at Urban Oasis. With the progress I've made and the skills I've learned, I hope to further my career in horticulture."

Urban Oasis trains in horticulture and agricultural production, but more realistically it gives training in job readiness, and uses "real job" work experience to help move trainees toward working in NYC. In 2004, 2 out of the 10 employees that worked during the season did get jobs in the community,

and that is one of the major goals of this Kingsboro Psychiatric Center experience.

For more information about Urban Oasis, contact Susan Braverman, Urban Oasis coordinator at 718-221-7132 or Linda Ameroso, 212-340-2967 (lma6@cornell.edu) Cornell University Cooperative Extension in NYC.

For information about selling at community based farmers' markets in NYC contact John Ameroso at 212-340-2946 (jma20@cornell.edu) Cornell University Cooperative Extension in NYC.

For information about Trinity Farm or about these farmers' personal experiences marketing in NYC, contact David or Veronica Haughton at 845-883-5478.

**Linda Ameroso is an Educator with Cornell University Cooperative Extension in New York City.**



Trainees of Urban Oasis work all facets of this business, from growing transplants for mini-farm production to marketing. Photographer: Linda Ameroso



Farm fresh apples supplied by Trinity Farm in Clintondale, NY lure customers inside the gazebo at Kingsboro's Farmers' Market. Community residents can buy produce grown on-site and picked the same morning along with fruits and vegetables grown by a participating NYS farmer. Photographer: Linda Ameroso

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**ORGANIC FARMING**

# Viability Through Cooperation - With Nature, Neighbors and Local Economies

By Glenda Neff

The key for small farms to access the burgeoning demand for local and organic foods is to work together for supply, packing, processing, sales and distribution.

Across New York State cooperatives, marketing associations, and business partnerships have started up to build this "economic infrastructure". Upstate NY Growers & Packers, Farm to Chef Express, and North Country Grown Cooperative are some of the newer entities, with Northeast Goat & Dairy Sheep Cooperative in its development stage.

Tuscarora Organic Growers Cooperative In southern Pennsylvania, Tuscarora Organic Growers Cooperative has been an inspiration and model for small farmer cooperatives. Started in 1988, the co-op began with five neighboring farms. Seventeen years later, 21 certified organic farms market fresh fruits, vegetables and herbs, cheese, eggs, flowers, and plants to restaurants and retail outlets in the Baltimore-Washington DC area. Annual sales have steadily increased to over \$1-million.

Tuscarora's members attribute the co-op's growth to hiring a professional general manager who developed a comprehensive marketing and organizational plan. The staff has grown to five, with a Sales Account/Marketing Manager maintaining close one-on-one relationships with their customers. Year-round planning and operations focus on ensuring a reliable supply of high-quality products. A customized database constantly updates product availability and prices; the co-ops web site has growers-only and members-only sections to aid in communication.

To sustain the loyalty of their customer base through the lean winter months, organic mushrooms, citrus fruits, and organic olive oil have been added to the offerings of winter storage crops; the co-op is close to reaching its goal of operating in the black all 12 months of the year.

**FOUNDING MEMBERS: NEW MORNING FARM**

If Tuscarora Organic Growers can be called a model cooperative for small farms, one can also learn and draw inspiration from its founding members. Jim and Moie Kimball Crawford are co-founders and their New Morning Farm provides the home base for Tuscarora's warehouse and offices. Their guiding philosophy exemplifies the values of cooperation in all aspects of the farm and co-op - from growing practices that enrich the soil, to cultivating interns into new farmers, to working together with neighbors to build a viable business.

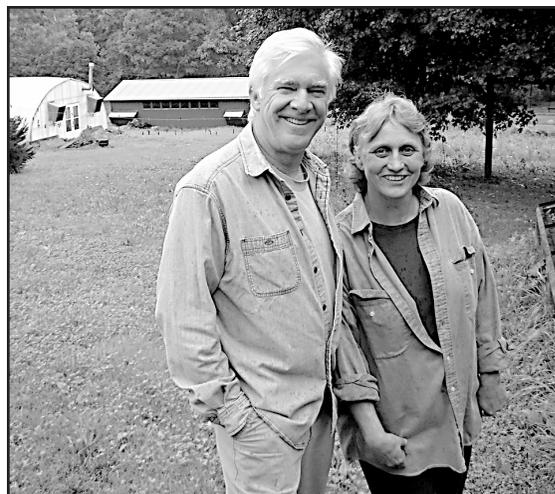
Jim and Moie grow about 40 crops, including berries and herbs, on 25 of their 95 acres on New Morning Farm. To keep pace with the fresh produce market, they grow more than 50 crops of vegetables, with from 180 to 200 plantings each year.

As they grew their business, the Kimball Crawford's realized that effective marketing of their organic vegetables would be a critical component of their success. "The simple way to do it was to load everything you had onto a truck and haul it down to the city to the wholesale market - unload it and get a few bucks," Jim says. "We tried that."

They also delivered wholesale products to retailers and restaurants. But they soon realized those approaches did not bring prices to justify the time spent managing sales. It also did not appeal much to buyers, such as chefs, to deal with an individual farmer when they were used to choosing from a huge line of offerings from distributors.

"We thought that by forming a cooperative and getting a group of growers together, we could be more attractive to the market and operate much more efficiently," says Jim. The Kimball Crawford's joined with five neighboring growers to form the Tuscarora Organic Growers Cooperative in 1988. The Cooperative now has a 5,000-square-foot office and warehouse equipped with coolers and short- and long- term storage facilities located on New Morning Farm.

By marketing the produce wholesale through their cooperative, the farmers incur a much lower marketing cost per unit. Jim describes the operation as a produce wholesaling distributorship. The major customers of the cooperative are small retailers and restaurants, and a few institutions. Restaurants buy about 60 percent of the produce.



Jim and Moie Kimball Crawford, founding members of Tuscarora Organic Growers Cooperative.

**NURTURING SOIL QUALITY**

Jim credits the increasing capacity of the New Morning Farm not only to the intensity with which they farm, but also to sustainable practices he feels have improved the quality of the land. The Kimball Crawford's are able to maintain fertility in their land, even under intensive use, through crop rotation and incorporating cover crops, minerals and other organic matter into the soil.

"To be operating in what we think of as a sustainable way, we're not depleting soil," Jim says. "We're building up the resources, which is very important to us." Each year, they test part of their acreage, usually patches that have generated some problems.

They not only look for the soil's phosphorus, potassium and organic matter content, but they also evaluate trace elements like calcium and sulfur. Jim is proud of the increased fertility of the soil, which he says has improved in the past 27 years. Those improvements can be seen in both improved plant quality and increased production.

"We started with land that was not particularly fertile," Jim recalls. "We were at a fairly low point, but we've seen an enormous change in the fertility of our land since." Their rotational system is more complex than that of larger, conventional farmers because of their wide array of crops. "We're always sure not to plant any crop in the same ground more often than every three or four years," Jim says.

**NURTURING FELLOW FARMERS**

The Kimball Crawford's structured their internship program to benefit their seasonal workers as well as help with their labor needs. Not only does an intern receive a monthly salary and free room and board, he or she will also likely earn an end of season bonus. Moreover, all interns participate in educational seminars about various aspects of production and marketing.

Working in the Tuscarora Organic Co-op puts the Kimball Crawford's in regular contact with other farmers who share their values. At about six meetings a year - and in phone conversations that take place frequently throughout the season -

the group trades information about new techniques, pest control and the like. "It's a very important part of co-op," Jim says. "We're learning all the time."

Jim cautions that those wishing to get into a family-sized vegetable operation may have a difficult time economically. They should expect to take a lot of risks and put in a lot of hard work. "We've survived because we have spent the last 35 years trying to develop a model that will support us," he says.

On a brighter side, Jim says a cooperative that markets your produce can make all the difference. "Marketing cooperatively is a fantastic improvement," he says. "You are part of a much larger system of which there is a lot more to offer to the buyer. And you're much more competitive with the mainstream."

**FEATURED SPEAKERS**

If you'd like to find out more about New Morning Farm and the Tuscarora Organic Growers Cooperative, Jim & Moie Kimball Crawford will be giving a keynote address and workshop at the NOFA-NY Annual Organic Farming & Gardening Conference on January 27-29, 2006 in Syracuse, New York. The theme of the conference is Cooperation with Nature, with Neighbors, with Local Economies. Go to [www.nofany.org](http://www.nofany.org) for full Program and Registration or call 607-652-NOFA to request a conference brochure.

Glenda Neff is a freelance agriculture writer in Auburn, NY. Portions of this article were excerpted from "The New American Farmer: Profiles of Agricultural Innovation" with permission from the Sustainable Agriculture Network (SAN). For more information about SAN or sustainable agriculture, see [www.sare.org](http://www.sare.org).

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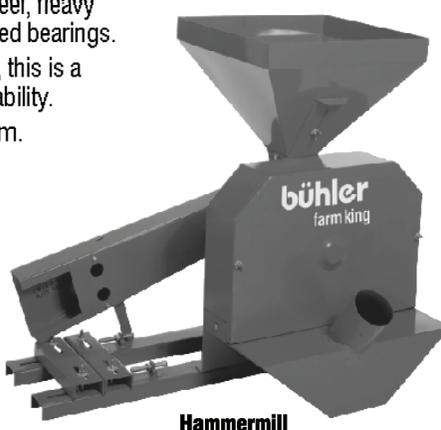
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**COWS AND CROPS**

# Lessons Learned on a Working Dairy Farm

## Fefee Farm

By Carl Tillinghast

My immediate impression when I drove into the driveway of Fefee Longmeadow Farm for the first time over 20 years ago was that this was truly a "working-farm". I know every dairy farm is a "working-farm," it's just that this farm had a no-frills look about it with things appearing like they were well oiled, greased, and ready to go to work.

On my trip back to the farm recently to talk with the Fefeas, my thoughts reflected back on my first visit. As I stepped from my truck I thought how little this place had changed over the years, it still has that blue-collar/working farm appearance... no frills but everything you need, and more, to go to work and make milk.

Having started from "scratch" in the dairy business some 34 years ago and being considered a success by your peers made me believe that Harry and Rita Fefee would have some good advice to pass along to other young farm managers and rural business people. With this in mind, I asked Harry if he would consent to a visit so I might write an article for others to read and possibly 'profit' from his years in the dairy business. It took a little coaxing but Harry and his wife Rita agreed to meet with me and share their story.

### OFF TO A ROCKY START

Harry will be the first to admit that he caught a break when he bought the farm in 1971 from Mr. Wesley Page. He knew and liked Mr. Page, having worked for him before and during his employment with NYABC as an A.I. technician. In 1971, after working for 10 years for NYABC, Harry decided it was time to buy his own dairy farm. Wesley knew Harry was interested in his farm, so the two got together and consulted with Cooperative Extension for help drawing-up a land contract. As a result, Harry started shipping milk under his own name in March of 1971.

The sun was shining on Harry the day he bought the Page property in that the farm came with a well-bred herd of cattle and soil resources that had the potential to grow alfalfa. In all, the farm totaled 267 acres total with 110 good tillable acres. The herd was comprised of 42 high producing

Holsteins and a couple of dozen nice heifers.

As so often happens in farming though, in the blink of an eye, good news can turn bad. That was the case with Harry and his newly acquired farm when a fire destroyed the barn in June of 1972. Fortunately the herd was not lost, but the job of rebuilding lay ahead and that was no small feat. Harry credits his ability to weather the aftermath of the fire to the generosity of his neighbors and a federal corn/oat program that by chance was available to farmers that year because of a terrible season for local crops.

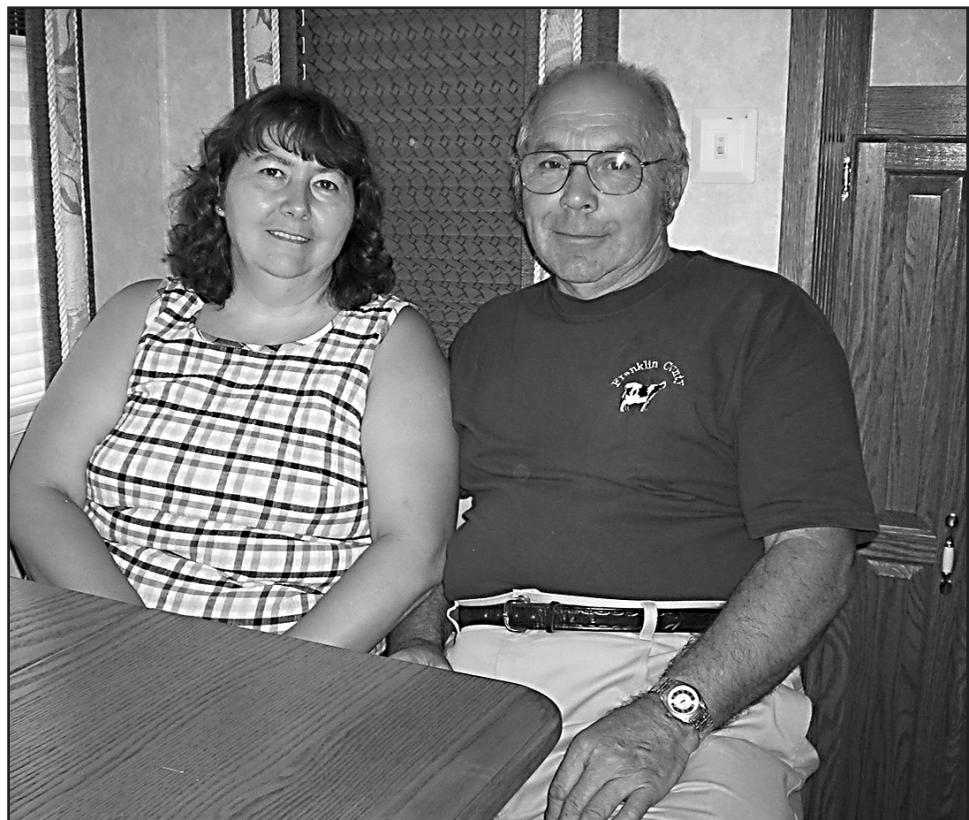
### GROWING THE BUSINESS

On a shoestring budget and for a sum of \$21,000 he managed to build another barn. By year's end Harry was shipping milk again out of his own facility. He realized early on, if he was to prosper in dairy farming he would have to grow his business, which he set about doing immediately. First he began growing his herd internally, going from 42 milkers in '72 to over 80 head in '77. Then, in 1974, Harry and his brother Peter agreed to a partnership, and the business was 'off to the races.'

With their herd growing and production skyrocketing, the Fefee brothers worked hard clearing and tiling every acre of land they could on the home farm in an effort to produce more high quality alfalfa. However, they soon realized they were not set up to handle this high quality crop in a consistent and efficient manner. With this in mind in 1978, they purchased their first 20'x 85' Harvestore haylage unit. Then in 1979 they added another haylage unit as well as one for high moisture corn. In 1982 a third and final haylage unit was constructed. During the late 1970's milk prices were quite favorable and the Fefee brothers were making a whole lot of it. With a solid income, they continued to grow their business by improving their land base, adding a manure system, building machinery storage, and a workshop.

### TIGHT TIMES

If the 70's were a time for growth in the Fefeas' business, then the 80's were a time to pay down debt, and Harry admits it wasn't easy. Interest rates in the 80's skyrocketed as banks devalued farm portfolios causing a significant reduction in the net worth



For nearly 35 years and counting, Harry and Rita Fefee have been successful at operating a dairy farm business in Moira, NY. They purchased the farm in 1971 and started from 'scratch.'

Photographer: Carl Tillinghast

on most dairy farms. It was during this time that Harry became a Director with Farm Credit, a position he held until 1998. He admits though, that being a director did not prevent their business in the early 80's from being put on a high risk "watch-list" by the bank. The business faced another major hurdle in the mid-80's when Peter had to leave the business because of an injury. But the brothers were able to work out a deal and the farm continued with Harry and Rita now at the helm.

I asked Harry how he managed to keep from getting discouraged in his business during the '80's when they were facing a high debt load and struggling daily with a very tight cash flow. He commented on a number of things that helped pull him through. First, he mentioned that he never stopped doing the little things right, which ultimately helped them to avoid bigger financial headaches down the road. As well, he said, "consistently doing the little things right made me feel better at the end

of the day."

Second, he made a priority to get out and belong to organizations to learn more about the dairy business from other good farmers and business people. He gives Rita lots of credit for this one, in that she was able and willing to cover for him on the "home-front" so he could get off the farm and serve on boards associated with Farm Credit, Farm Bureau, and Cooperative Extension, North Lawrence and Allied Milk Cooperatives.

Third, the Fefeas' consistently made a lot of quality milk that allowed them to pay their bills. And fourth, when times got lean, so did they, paying down debt and purchasing nothing unless it could make them money.

As the business matured throughout the 90's, leveling off at its current herd size of a little over a hundred milking cows, the Fefeas paid down debt and built equity in their business. They continued to make

*Continued on next page*

## HOME & FAMILY

# Keep it Cool!

By Carole Fisher

Do you know what the temperature inside your refrigerator is? Do you know what it should be?

These are questions that the FDA's Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition and the USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service want consumers to be aware of. Keeping foods refrigerated at the right temperature is one of the most effective ways to reduce the chances of contracting a foodborne illness.

The FDA and the USDA recommend maintaining a refrigerator temperature of 40° F or below, and using a refrigerator thermometer to monitor it.

Why? Bacteria and other microorganisms that may be on foods grow rapid-

ly in warm temperatures. Keeping a constant refrigerator temperature of 40° F or below helps slow down the growth of harmful microbes.

This new initiative by the Partnership for Food Safety Education, called BACDown!, is based on a risk assessment report on Listeria monocytogenes, the bacteria responsible for the foodborne illness, Listeriosis. Although most healthy people do not get Listeriosis, it can cause serious illness in pregnant women and newborns, older adults, and people with weakened immune systems. The report estimates that cases of Listeriosis would be reduced by 70% if all home refrigerator temperatures were kept at 40° F or below.

According to a 2005 survey, only 20% of consumers say they actually use a refrigerator thermometer. However, they are readily available at grocery

stores, discount, and hardware stores.

Other tips to keep foods cool:

- Divide large portions of leftovers into small, shallow containers for quicker cooling;
- Make sure refrigerators aren't over-stuffed so that cold air can circulate;
- A range of 38° to 40° F is best. Too low a temperature inside the refrigerator wastes energy dollars and may cause ice crystals to form on foods.

For more information about food safety contact your local Cooperative Extension Office.

**Carole Fisher is a Community Educator with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County. Reprinted with permission from Food & Family Well-Being, Spring 2005.**

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## Small Farm Quarterly

# Youth Pages

## Horse Equine Camp Inspires Career Choices

By Grace Seeley, Independent 4-H Club member, age 16

When you think of careers in the equine world you don't necessarily think of being a dentist, cobbler, or even a construction worker...or do you?

Eleven 4-H girls including myself now think of these occupations as part of the vast equine realm. The 2005 Equine Career Camp held at 4-H Camp Bristol Hills was an electrifying experience for me. Although all of the girls who attended this camp came with some knowledge of horses and a definite interest in them, all of us left camp with much more knowledge about horse related careers and how we want to pursue them.

We were introduced to people who have successful careers related to horses. We met people in careers as specific to

horses as a farrier, all the way to a professional salesman for tin buildings. These men and women were all outstanding in their field and shared many stories including situations that helped get them there and how they overcame difficulties.

This camp significantly helped me find a path to follow in the future. Shortly after attending the program I decided my college major, college of choice, and what I plan to focus on in order to achieve a successful career. I am so confident about my decision that I even attended a small group tour and talked with a guidance counselor at Morrisville State College. I had always known I wanted a career directly with

horses but the Equine Career Camp helped me to refine that to a specific area.

Equine Career Camp took us to the widest points of the equine arena and has influenced the way I think about where I'm going in the future.



Grace Seeley learns about the horse industry from Tim Phelan, head trainer at Sugar Hill Farms during Equine Camp.

## Where Can A Kid Explore, Experience, Make Friends and Have Fun?

By Hannah Young, Independent 4-H member, age 18

My name is Hannah Young. I am eighteen years old and live on a dairy farm in Clifton Springs.

I started 4-H at age seven, the same year that I showed my first calf. Now, my herd has grown to twenty-four animals and I'm on my way to Cornell to study animal science and pursue a career in the dairy industry. Through the dairy project, I have developed my Holstein herd and have been recognized as a Junior Progressive Breeder by the Holstein Association; however, I feel my biggest accomplishment has been coming in first place at New York State Dairy Bowl. Ever since my brother went to the National Contest in Kentucky with his team I have dreamed of going too. Now my dream is coming true and I am captain of the team, and my brother is the coach.

4-H has introduced me to a number of other projects as well. I sewed my first skirt at age nine and won a blue ribbon at state fair. Now my skills have developed to the point I made a designer pantsuit from wool with a coordinating stole and purse. With this outfit I represented New York State at the National Make it Yourself With Wool Contest in January of 2005.

I have also dabbled in dog obedience. It started when I acquired my Shih-Tzu in 2001. Our first year showing we came away from State Fair as Champion of the Beginner A class. Two years later the second dog I have trained (daughter to the first) received Reserve Champion Beginner B. I am now expanding my dog obedience activities into agility, grooming, and handling.

Another highlight for me has been attending the Junior Dairy Leader Program. In this we toured farms and learned about different aspects of the dairy industry. Most importantly, we learn about ourselves. One memo-



Hannah Young with her champion Shih-Tzu dogs.

ry stands out for me. While at the ropes course, learning how to work as a team, another girl and I decided to attempt the "Giants Ladder." After watching a boy climb only halfway up, we figured we'd only make it to the second rung. The rungs were made of unstable wood logs and got further apart as you climbed. A team of two people was required to make it to the top. So we started climbing and after some hard work we found ourselves on the fourth rung. We looked up at the next ring and thought there is no way we will make it to that one. I would have to stand up with nothing secure to balance on and nothing to hold onto in order to grasp the next rung. I thought there was no way I could ever do it, but we were finally

coaxed on by the people below. I cautiously stood up, reached... and Yes! I grabbed the next rung! From there my partner and I managed to sit on that rung. We were very excited about our accomplishment.

4-H has certainly made the best of my life better, and continues to help me with my college education.

## ACTIVITY

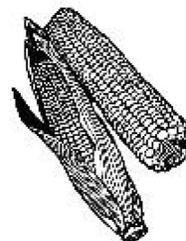
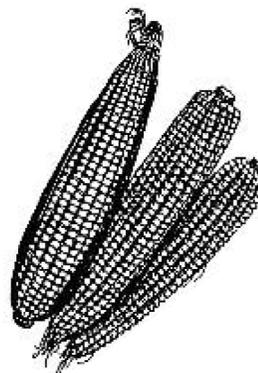
### AGRICULTURE AND YOU

Brought to you by  
New York Agriculture in the Classroom  
[www.cerp.cornell.edu/aitc](http://www.cerp.cornell.edu/aitc)

#### Corn in Your Kitchen: Make Your Own Bio-Plastic. . .in Your Microwave!

Over 3,000 grocery store products are made with processed corn. A few corn derivatives include: monosodium glutamate, xanthan gum additives, cornstarch, high fructose corn syrup, dextrose (a corn sugar sweetener), and maltodextrin. How many can you find in products at your house?

1. Check with an adult at your house before trying this.
2. Place a tablespoon of cornstarch into a plastic Ziploc bag.
3. Add two drops of corn oil to the cornstarch.
4. Add one tablespoon of water to the oil and cornstarch.
5. Mix the cornstarch, corn oil, and water in the plastic bag by rubbing the outside of the bag with your fingers.
6. Add two drops of your favorite food coloring and mix again.
7. Have an adult help you place the bag in a microwave oven on HIGH for 20-25 seconds. DO NOT completely seal the bag (it might explode). Be careful, it's hot!!



#### Observations:

1. What do you notice about your biodegradable plastic?
2. What could you make with this biodegradable plastic if you let it harden? Remember that it will dissolve eventually (keep it in plastic).
3. Form your plastic into a ball while it is still warm and describe what it does.
4. Compare your biodegradable plastic with the plastic Ziploc bag

Activity adapted from Field Guide to Utah Agriculture in the Classroom [www.agclassroom.org/ut](http://www.agclassroom.org/ut)  
More fun agriculture activities can be found at The Sci4Kids site at [www.ars.usda.gov/is/kids](http://www.ars.usda.gov/is/kids)

New York Agriculture in the Classroom helps kids and adults understand and appreciate the importance of agriculture in their lives.

# Orleans Groovy Girls

## Love the Simple Life of Country Living

By Jessica Brown (15), Mary Boerjan (16) and Carrie Sheppard (16), members Orleans Groovy Girls

The Orleans Groovy Girls 4-H Club is a traditional 4-H Club comprised of girls who love the simple life of country living. For the past 7 years, we have enjoyed learning to cook, sew, make wonderful gifts using the talents of our hands while exploring our own creativity, and helping people in our community.

We started out small doing just the basics – like how to make homemade cookies, how to hand sew, and how to have fun with people of all ages. Along the way we learned valuable lessons – how to tell the difference between salt and sugar, that a thimble really does come in handy, and it's always better to give than to receive. Now we are planning and preparing healthy three course meals for our friends, family and fellow 4-Hers, sewing Civil War and Renaissance dresses, and giving back to our community. Our 4-H Club is community minded and most of our activities revolve around organizing and participating in various community activities.

For example, every year we put on a community Halloween Party for all the local kids. We use our sewing talents to make our own costumes. We make homemade cupcakes and punch for the kids. We play games our parents and grandparents enjoyed such as bobbing for apples and eating doughnuts off of a string. We also make our own piñatas out of newspaper, flour and water and decorate them with a Halloween theme. The kids enjoy the challenge of breaking the piñata open.

Not once, but twice our 4-H Club has put its cooking talents to the real test when we accepted the challenge of cooking a homemade spaghetti dinner for 200+ people. We prepared and served our fellow 4-Hers and their families a well balanced home cooked meal at 4-H Camp Bristol Hills. The dinner kicked off the annual Achievement Day Program which provided 4-Hers throughout the county the opportunity to celebrate their accomplishments over the past year.



The Orleans Groovy Girls choose a theme each year for their 4-H Fashion Show sewing projects. They have previously constructed Wizard of Oz costumes and the 50's Rock'n Roll. This year they each wanted to construct a period dress from a favorite historical period.

We also enjoy the art of clowning, make our own clown costumes, and have even developed our own character. We put our clowning talents to work by volunteering to paint faces and make balloon animals at our local school's family night and Cub Scout functions. Our clowning skills also came in handy when we volunteered our services at a "Tot Lot" babysitting clinic at a local Cub Scout camp to watch the children of the adult volunteers.

Aside from clowning around, we do get serious about improving our public speaking skills. Our Club participates in both County

and District 4-H Public Presentation competitions and has had the opportunity to represent our County at State competition three years in a row. There you are judged on how well you know your topic, your visuals, and how comfortable you are talking in front of people. Presentations are very nerve-racking, but they also help you in school when you need to give a speech. You learn how best to present yourself. It will also help later on in life when we are interviewing for college and jobs.

Our state 4-H slogan is "4-H Takes You Places." In our opinion 4-H does take you places, both to new surroundings and to places inside of you that you might never have discovered.



Jessica Brown, Mary Boerjan and Carrie Sheppard, Orleans Groovy Girls, shown here clowning around.

## Multiplying Rabbits

By Casey Cazer, Casa de Llama 4-H Club, age 14

Breeding and showing rabbits is a rewarding hobby. It teaches responsible pet ownership, management, and breeding practices. It also offers opportunities for recognition of hard work and perseverance.

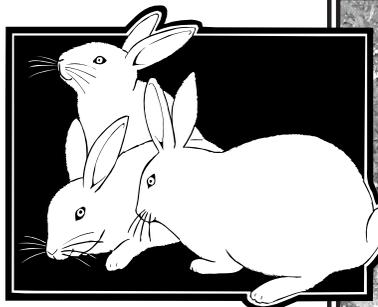
I received my first rabbit when I was just four years old from my grandmother. It was of mixed breed and I did not show it but I loved its loveable personality. I acquired and showed many different breeds over the years including American Chinchillas, French Angoras, Mini Rexes, and Satins. I brought them to my county fair once a year and tried my luck at local 4-H shows.

I received a broken Holland Lop doe as a prize from an essay contest when I was eleven years old from a former 4-H'er. I found a quality Holland Lop breeder and bought three more rabbits, two bucks and a doe. I love the Holland Lop's curious personality and small size. They have a unique, bulldog type body.

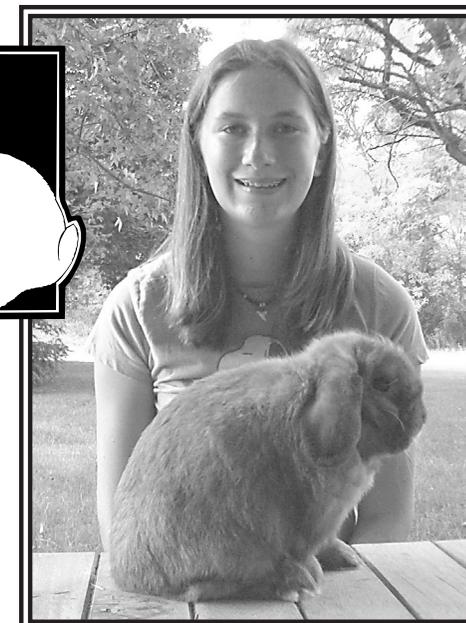
Currently I am trying to expand my herd size with brood does in the hopes of having more litters. My goal is to produce winning rab-

bits and create my own blood-line. I have produced two winning rabbits so far, but I do not have enough to try starting my own blood-line. The purpose of breeding rabbits and creating blood-lines is to show off your winners at national and state level shows.

I make an effort to attend at least one state show per year and bring at least four rabbits. At the state show last year I was honored to win the title of rabbit duchess for my knowledge of rabbit breeds and science. This year I also had the chance to attend American Rabbit Breeders Association (ARBA) Convention and Show during November in Providence, Rhode Island. One of my bucks placed second in his class of 50+, which made me very proud of all the conditioning work and research I put into him. Rabbit judging is "judge based", not "handler based" as it is in other species like dogs, so it is up to the judge to pose the rabbit and all the handler can do is to condition the rabbit to its best potential and look on. A national show is also a great time to buy rabbits from lines across the nation, not just from your local area. I purchased a doe at the Providence show so that I can add her good qualities to my line.



Rabbits have given me an interest in genetics and biology. Today, most of the research on rabbit genetics is done on coat color. I find it fascinating. In my own herd, I hope to study the genetics that create good and bad body types, such as large heads or proportional bodies. I like to share my knowledge with other 4-H'ers in my county and so I lead clinics on topics from genetics to showmanship and tattooing rabbits. Sharing my knowledge with others in 4-H is rewarding. I have seen the pride in the eye of a young Cloverbud as he learned to safely and effi-



Casey Cazer of Ontario County is shown here with one of her award winning Holland Lops. She has exhibited at local, regional, state and national shows.

ciently turn over his rabbit for a health check and nail clipping. Someday these young rabbit owners will be teaching their own clinics to the next generation of 4-H'ers.

I hope to acquire my registrars' license from ARBA next year which will enable me to examine rabbits for disqualifications and issue registrations. After that I plan to get a judging license so that I can judge rabbits at ARBA shows.

Rabbits take up little space and care but are rewarding all the same. It is exhilarating to watch your rabbits win titles on the show table. There are also opportunities for youth to win awards for their knowledge of rabbits. ARBA offers many opportunities for older youth also, becoming a registrar, judge, or an officer of your local rabbit club is a great goal. There is a lot to experience when you decide to raise rabbits, and besides, it is great fun!

## MARKETING

# The Fast Growing Organic Milk Market: In Need of Producers

By Fay Benson

The market for organic milk has fluctuated since the 1960s, but a stable market, which has a critical mass of consumers to support the processing of this raw commodity, has only been around the northeast since the 1990s when Peter Flint started "Organic Cow" in Vermont.

Here in New York State, organic milk sales began with a number of businesses that started around 1995, including Juniper Valley, Elmhurst Dairies and Sunnysdale Milk Producers who started a partnership with "Natural by Nature." You may recall that 1994-1995 was the time when Monsanto introduced BST to the dairy industry. This growth hormone caused concern in a lot of consumers and farmers alike, thus BST was the catalyst that gave organic milk its critical mass of consumers, allowing it to expand into more and more markets.

## DEMAND FOR ORGANIC MILK IS STRONGER THAN IT WAS IN 1997

I completed my organic certification in 1997 and began selling milk to Natural by Nature; at the time they were selling some of their milk to Organic Cow in Vermont. My first organic milk left this area on a truck, which had to travel 1200 miles every other day in order to fill the truck and deliver it to the Organic Cow facility in Vermont. It took two truck drivers to load and complete this trip. Fortunately, the farmers don't pay trucking.

The market is still driven by demand, and the need for more producers in NY is obvious with the importation of 15 million lbs. of

milk into our state every month to help balance the market. To help with questions farmers may have concerning the transition to organic dairy, Cornell Cooperative Extension South Central Dairy and Field Crops Team recently held a transition to organic dairy workshop. We visited Phil Stauderman's farm in Genoa, NY.

Phil completed his transition in the fall of 2003 and now ships to Horizon Dairy. At the workshop there were over 40 participants, most were transitioning or thinking of transitioning. In addition to hearing how Phil handled the challenges of transition, we also had representatives from the three major buyers in this area: Horizon, Organic Valley, and the newest buyer, Hood.

Organic Valley is a farmer-owned cooperative, their representative Jim Gardiner spoke about the strong cooperative spirit that differentiates Organic Valley from the other two companies. Horizon and Hood both are associated through Dairy Marketing Services (DMS) for procurement, trucking, and inspection. Their representatives outlined similar benefits that included: \$1 per cwt. for the 12-month (cow) transition, a signing bonus of \$1 per cwt. for the first three months, quality premiums up to \$1 per cwt., free trucking, and a base price of \$22 per cwt., which will increase 1.5% annually.

## THE DOWN SIDE

When I became certified, organic corn was \$170/ton, and soy bean was \$500/ton. These prices seemed high but I figured that with these prices eventually there would be more grain farmers entering the market and

Helping Nature Control Diseases and Pests Organically, by Brian Caldwell

- Whole Farm Planning: Ecological Imperatives, Personal Values and Economics, by Elizabeth Henderson and Karl North

- Compost, Vermicompost and Compost Tea: Feeding the Soil on the Organic Farm, by Grace Gershuny
- Soil Resiliency and Health: Crop Rotation and Cover Cropping on the Organic Farm, by Seth Kroeck
- Marketing and Community Relations, by Rebecca Bosch
- Humane, Healthy Poultry Production: A Manual for Organic Growers, by Karma Glos
- Organic Dairy Production, by Sarah Flack
- The Wisdom of Plant Heritage: Organic Seed Production and Saving, by Bryan Connolly with contributing editor CR Lawn

The series was funded by the NOFA Interstate Council, NOFA/Mass and USDA's Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education. Suggested retail price is \$7.95. Bulk price \$4.50 per book (minimum 6 books of any title), \$3.50 order fee plus 30¢ per book postage. To order, visit [www.nofa.org](http://www.nofa.org) or contact Elaine Peterson at [info@nofamass.org](mailto:info@nofamass.org) or 978 355-2853.

## ORGANIC FARMING

### Resource Spotlight

## NOFA Organic Principles and Practices Handbook Series

The Northeast Organic Farming Association has announced the completion of the NOFA Organic Principles and Practices Handbook Series; ten handbooks that present the most proven and successful practices of organic farmers around the region. All ten handbooks, illustrated and 60 - 110 pages in length, are written by talented farmer-writers and include tables, references and farm profiles and are fully indexed. Pre-publication review by farmers and scientists with relevant backgrounds has assured that each covers up-to-date experience and research.

The NOFA Handbook Series is designed to give you a clear, comprehensive view of key farming practices from the organic perspective. The content is geared to serious farmers, gardeners and homesteaders and those looking to make the transition. Good farmers arrive at their own best methods to suit their situations of place and pocket-book. These handbooks may help organic practitioners review and reconsider their concepts and practices in light of holistic biological realities, classic works and recent research as well as functioning, on-farm examples.

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A growing number of small-scale creameries like Sunrise and Evans Farmhouse Creamery also serve the expanding market for organic milk.

this would bring down the price. What I didn't count on was that human consumption was going up at the same time so the livestock feed had to compete with that, so now shelled corn brings \$230/ton and soy is \$600/ton if you can find it.

Managing these higher costs plus the other challenges of producing milk organically



Shoppers like Sarah Regenspan and her dad David can find several brands of organic milk at GreenStar Co-op in Ithaca, NY. Like many other consumers, they say they're turning to organic milk to avoid antibiotics, synthetic hormones and pesticides in their food.

makes organic dairy farming a management intensive business. The producer has to rely less on solutions to problems such as animal health, and more on prevention of the problems in the first place. I tell farmers that it helps to not look at themselves as milk producers, but rather as herdsmen caring for their animals, which happens to produce milk. Focusing on the animals' well being helps reduce stress which is a key to a healthy animal.

## WHERE I THINK THE MARKET WILL GO

With more than ten years of escalating demand for organic milk, this market is not a fad similar to the blip the Atkins Diet had on the food market, which lasted 1-2 years. Organic milk supply has never caught up with consumers' demand. Sharad Mathur of Dairy Marketing Services says there is currently a shortage of 5-6 tractor trailer loads of organic milk every day in New York State alone.

But there are some gray clouds out there; with the USDA taking over control of the rules for certifications there has been some fear that two major loopholes will favor large dairies. The first loophole is the "Origin of Livestock" which some read to say any heifer might be brought in as long as they are fed organically for the year before they start milking. The stricter reading of the rules would say that the animal has to be raised organically for three months before it is born (last third of its gestation).

The other major loophole, which is currently being addressed, concerns the require-

Continued on next page

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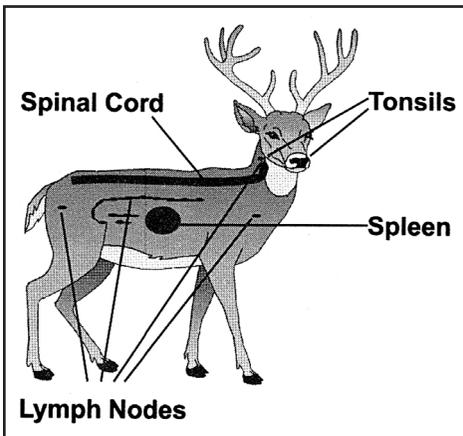
# Chronic Wasting Disease Now in NY State and West Virginia

By Gary R. Goff

With the March 2005 discovery of captive deer infected with chronic wasting disease (CWD) in Oneida County, New York became the easternmost state to harbor this fatal disease of deer and elk. Since then, two wild deer have been documented to have the disease. Then on September 2, West Virginia Division of Natural Resources posted a news release confirming that a road-killed white-tailed deer from Hampshire County, WV, tested positive for CWD. The 2.5-year-old buck was discovered about 25 miles south of the Pennsylvania/Maryland line, due south of Bedford County, Pennsylvania.

**THE DISEASE**

CWD is a nervous system disease of deer and elk only. It belongs to the family of diseases known as transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs). CWD is in the same family of diseases as bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE or mad cow disease) in cattle, scrapie in sheep and Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD) in humans.



When processing deer for meat, minimize handling of brain and spinal tissue, and take care in disposing of hide, brain, spinal cord, eyes, spleen, tonsils, lymph nodes, bones, and head.

It is believed that CWD is transmitted through deer-to-deer contact and environmental contamination. There is no scientific evidence that CWD is transmissible to other animals by contact or through consuming meat from an infected deer. In addition,

there is no evidence that humans can contract the disease from either consuming the meat or handling parts of infected deer.

Although there is no CWD link with human diseases, health officials provide recommendations for venison processors and consumers that will provide protection from CWD and any other disease that deer may carry.

CWD can incubate in deer or elk for 15 months to several years before exhibiting clinical signs. As the brain deteriorates, the animal begins to exhibit clinical signs that can include weight loss, behavioral changes such as isolation, blank facial expression, nervousness, excessive salivation, teeth grinding, increased drinking, and frequent urination. Once symptoms occur, animals die within days to a few months.

**EFFECT ON WHITE-TAILED DEER POPULATIONS**

There has not been enough research to draw conclusions on CWD's long-term effects on deer populations. However, there is enough known to cause concern among deer biologists. In states such as Colorado and Wyoming where the disease has been present for more than a decade, the prevalence of CWD in wild deer populations has been observed at 1%-15%.

This rate, by itself, is not sufficient to cause significant reductions in deer population size. However, these observations occurred in states where deer populations do not achieve the high densities that occur in NY, WI, and now WV. In captive deer herds, CWD can reach remarkably high infection rates of more than 90%. Such infection rates in wild deer populations would have devastating effects.

**THE MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR CWD**

Hunting is the wildlife manager's most important tool for regulating deer abundance. High deer population densities lead to more rapid spread of CWD in an infected herd. Consequently, programs to reduce the deer population, which may include increased harvest of female deer, will be implemented in areas where CWD has been detected.

New York has 178 licensed white-tailed deer farms, 77 registered elk farms, and approximately 1 million free ranging white-tailed deer. The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the Department of Agriculture and Markets (DAM) are the lead State agencies who develop plans to protect wild and captive deer and elk herds and monitor the effect of CWD. Although the actions taken by these agencies to protect the state's animal

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ment for pasture. There are some 3000-cow organic herds that are not able to pasture their animals, and the rules are not clear enough to this issue. One of these farms, Aurora Dairy located in Colorado, sells their milk in New York under the

"Nature's Promise" label. Colorado's Ag department certifies the milk. Consumers have a perception of organic production; animals on pasture are one of the perceptions they expect. A definitive pasture rule would help to protect the confidence that consumers give to organic dairy products.

The use of pasture is a benefit to the health of the animals, to their products, and the environment.

I believe that these loopholes will eventually be sorted out without any major change to the market, providing that those involved with setting the rules remember the most important part of the market equation is the consumers. They are the ones paying a distinctly higher price for a product they believe is better for them and the environment.

**For more information on becoming a certified organic dairy producer, contact Lisa Englebert with the Northeast Organic Farming Association of NY at (607) 724-9851 or visit the Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance at www.nodpa.com.**

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## COWS AND CROPS

## Milking 46 of 52 Weeks at Sullivan's Seasonal, Grazing Dairy

By Peggy Murray

Kevin and Amy Sullivan operate a 65-cow dairy in Lewis County where they both grew up on dairy farms. After graduating high school, Kevin started farming with his father. In 1985, he rented his existing farm from his parents and starting milking 35 cows. He grew hay, corn silage and grain corn.

After a couple years of traditional dairying, Kevin and Amy took a suggestion from consultant Jim Martindale and converted to rotational grazing in 1987. Kevin switched his 170 acres to all grass and legumes, and the herd is grazed from May through October.

Starting in 1991, Kevin and Amy made a second, and bigger, transition. They began switching to seasonal dairying, which requires that all cows be dried off simultaneously from January through March.

At the time the Sullivans didn't know any-

one who milked cows only about 46 out of 52 weeks a year. So Kevin researched seasonal dairying by reading articles on the topic, and he turned to Amy and other family members such as his father for guidance. It took until 1993 for the Sullivans' herd to be fully seasonal.

The Sullivans milk in a tiestall pipeline set-up during the winter months when the cows are housed. During the grazing months, the couple milks in a flat-barn parlor that Kevin built in 1999 for approximately \$1,200. Using the flat-barn parlor cuts down on summer barn cleaning and milking time.

The couple also stopped harvesting all their own crops and hired Kevin's brother to custom harvest them. This cuts the family's machinery costs and gets their crops harvested faster.

Mechanics, Management & Resources Grazing and seasonal dairying make sense for Kevin and Amy. They didn't want to live in their barn and wanted to make things

easier for themselves and their herd. Seasonal dairying suits them since they enjoy snowmobiling and skiing and usually take a vacation during the wintertime.

So when Jim Martindale suggested grazing, the timing was good. To implement the transition, the Sullivans wrote down their 5- and 10-year goals for their banker. Kevin reviewed those goals five years after he wrote them and discovered that he and Amy had met those goals.

The transition went better than expected, though people initially thought they "were crazy." The couple eased into the changes, taking three years to become a seasonal herd.

The biggest hurdle was training the cows to the flat-barn parlor. The first year the Sullivans almost gave up, but now the cows remember from one year to the next. Kevin trains first-calf heifers to the parlor before they freshen so they are used to it after they calve. Pasture management also was

challenging in the beginning.

The transition has been a lifestyle change for Kevin and Amy. But they firmly believe if their cows are happy, then they're happy. "Comfortable cows make happy people," Kevin says.

Kevin manages the livestock, cropping and pastures, while Amy cares for calves up to six months of age. Kevin does the farm's bookkeeping, and he and Amy make financial decisions together. The couple doesn't use any type of computer program for record keeping.

The Sullivans' dairy was profitable before the transition, and their reason to make the changes wasn't financial. But money and budgeting were their biggest concerns about the transition to seasonal dairy.

Their cash flow was tight the first year of seasonal dairying, but they never borrowed money to finance the changes. When they

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## Chronic Wasting Disease

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resources differ, the overall objectives are to prevent the importation of infected animals and/or materials and stop the spread of CWD.

DEC and DAM have collaborated with staff from the NYS Department of Health (DOH), the U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA-APHIS), and Cornell University's College of Veterinary Medicine, Animal

Health Diagnostic Center, and Department of Natural Resources, to create a containment and management plan for CWD.

## PREVENTING CWD ON DEER AND ELK FARMS

DAM has issued an emergency rule (1NYCRR Part 68) aimed at preventing CWD on NY's deer and elk farms. The rule requires individual animal identification, fencing standards and testing, and imposes strict controls on animal movement. DAM is developing a permanent rule for deer and elk farms which will replace this emergency

rule. Provisions include:

- Mandatory testing—Required for all deer and elk 16 months or older that die, show signs of disease or go to slaughter; and annual testing of a minimum number of deer from every farm.
- Imports from other states—Importation of live deer and elk from other states is prohibited unless they are from CWD-free certified herds and from known CWD-free areas. DEC restricts the movement of carcasses and parts from deer or elk originating from states or provinces with known CWD infections.
- In-state movement—Farmers that move deer or elk off their premises must be enrolled in the herd certification program. For the first five years of enrollment herd certification status level is increased. Those farms receiving animals can only receive animals from instate herds that have equal or higher herd certification status.
- Quarantine, condemnation—If any animal tests positive for CWD, the herd will be quarantined and animals may be destroyed. In most cases, owners will be eligible for indemnity payments.

## WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I OBSERVE OR HARVEST A DEER THAT I SUSPECT MIGHT HAVE CWD?

Call your local DEC regional office during normal business hours.

**Gary R. Goff is a Senior Extension Associate in Cornell's Department of Natural Resources. He can be reached at 607-255-2824, or grg3@cornell.edu.**



Deer biologists are concerned about the potential impact of chronic wasting disease on wild and farmed deer herds.

## Processing Deer Meat Safely

- Identify and store meat and trimmings from each deer separately. Each hunter should get meat only from animals he/she shot.
- Process all deer from a CWD containment area separately.
- Wear rubber or latex gloves.
- Minimize the handling of brain or spinal tissue. If removing antlers, use a saw designated for that purpose only, and dispose of the blade.
- Dispose of hide, brain, spinal cord, eyes, spleen, tonsils, lymph nodes, bones, and head. Seal in plastic bags and dispose at a sanitary landfill or via a licensed waste hauler
- Remove lymph nodes in and near joints.
- Bone out meat from the deer and remove all fat and connective tissue. This will also remove lymph nodes.
- Do not cut through spinal column. Avoid using a saw.
- Liberally cut away and dispose of meat near any spinal cord wounds.
- Thoroughly clean and sanitize equipment and work areas with bleach before using it for other processing.
- Use a solution of equal parts chlorine bleach and water. Wipe down countertops and let them dry. Soak items such as knives one hour. When finished, dilute the solution further and pour it down a drain.
- Dispose of all unwanted carcasses or parts at a sanitary landfill or via a licensed waste hauler.

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Resource Spotlight  
More About Chronic Wasting Disease

New York State Conservationist is an award-winning, ad-free magazine featuring stunning photography and informative articles. The October 2005 issue features an in-depth article on CWD, from which our article is adapted. You can subscribe to Conservationist online at [www.theconservationist.org](http://www.theconservationist.org) or by calling 1-800-678-6399.

NYS DEC Bureau of Wildlife CWD pages  
[www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dfwmr/wildlife/deer/currentcwd.html](http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dfwmr/wildlife/deer/currentcwd.html)

Department of Agriculture & Markets CWD pages  
[www.agmkt.state.ny.us/AI/cwd.html](http://www.agmkt.state.ny.us/AI/cwd.html)  
 1-800-554-4501 or by email  
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Cornell Cooperative Extension CWD pages  
<http://wildlifecontrol.info/CWD/default.htm>

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converted to a seasonal herd, Kevin's father, who holds the real estate mortgage, offered to let them skip a payment. Kevin and Amy have never taken him up on his offer.

The Sullivans don't make less money than before the transition, but it comes mostly in the summer. Budgeting is critical to their having money during the winter months when Kevin and Amy's herd is dried off and they don't receive any milk checks.

They find that during those months it's easy to spend a lot of money on entertainment and eating out. Their awareness of this hazard makes Kevin and Amy more careful about spending.

**THE FUTURE**

The Sullivans' dairy is more profitable after the transitions. The couple owns all the livestock, equipment, buildings and facilities.

They have no plans to expand since they are fully using their land and don't want to grow extra forages to feed their herd in the summer.

Kevin and Amy's long-term goals are to:

- Be debt free. They have two children and want to keep the option open for them to come into the business.
- Fine-tune practices.



The Sullivan farm in Lewis County operates as a seasonal, grazing dairy.

- Improve milk quality.
- Convert from storing forages in upright silos to bunk silos.

Kevin began putting oat seeds in his hayseed mixture, using oatlage as a backup in his pasture. And cows like it. Kevin doesn't spend a lot of money on exotic seed; orchard grass works well.

The couple has suggestions for others who are considering grazing and seasonal dairying:

- All aspects of the business transition are critical to success. All your eggs are in one basket so be careful.
- Make arrangements to board cows that don't get bred on time and, therefore, are not dried off with the rest of the herd. Kevin usually doesn't have a problem finding someone to take cows, he says.

People are often looking to fill their barns, and Kevin gives them the milk income.

- It's important to get the cows bred back on time. The Sullivans cull cows that get bred late, and they cull hard for fertility. They raise approximately 20 heifer calves and sell between 12 and 15 dairy animals each year.
- As with any transition, go slowly, talk to other people and use all the resources available.

Initially Kevin found little information about grazing and, especially, seasonal dairying. But things have changed: More resources and programs on both management practices exist today. He faithfully reads and subscribes to New Farm

(www.newfarm.org) and Grass Farmer (www.stockmangrassfarmer.com) magazines. And Kevin researches things on the Internet. Cooperative Extension has organized grazing groups and pasture walks. Talking to other farmers is always helpful.

Kevin and Amy measure their success by the quality of their family life and their checkbook. As long as they can pay their bills, they feel they are successful. Good management is the key to their success. And Kevin and Amy are excellent managers.

Peggy Murray is a farm business educator with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Lewis County. This article is one of twelve in the new "Profiles of Successful Strategies for Small Dairy Farms" publication, funded by the Northern New York Agricultural Development Program (NNYADP), a farmer-driven research and education program specific to Essex, Clinton, Franklin, St. Lawrence, Lewis and Jefferson counties. Other profiles are online at www.nnyagdev.org.

The couple doesn't push for production. Still their cows average 70 to 75 pounds during May and June before the weather turns hot.

**TRANSITION TIPS**

Success depends on several things. Weather, of course, is critical to cropping and grazing. Kevin relies on long-term forecasting accessed through the Internet and by satellite to help him plan for the weather.



The Sullivan's dairy herd is grazed from May through October. When they made the transition to a grazing operation, the Sullivans switched 170 acres to all grass and legumes

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## COMMUNITY/WORLD

# Getting a Lesson in Agritourism from North of the Border

By Bernadette Logozar

In 2004, a group of farmers, economic development folks, town supervisors and extension educators from Essex, Franklin and Clinton counties in New York took a bit of a jaunt north of the 49th parallel to learn about how farms, economic development and government are cooperating to promote and sustain their small and large farms in southern Quebec. We brought back a wealth of ideas, innovations and goodies from our trip.

## THE CIRCUIT DU PAYSAN

The five farms we visited are part of the Circuit du Paysan, which enables visitors to take a 'country trip' in the southwestern part of Montérégie. The area is located at the foot of the Adirondacks, bordering the United States between the Richelieu River and Lake Saint-Francis. The entire Circuit is 194 kilometers and takes about 6 hours to traverse.

Each business on the circuit reveals persons passionate about their art or their craft: artisan, wine maker, cider maker, farmer, breeder, chef and innkeeper, each willing to share their knowledge of the region as well as their know-how, often derived from traditions of past generations.

## WHERE DID WE GO?

Our first stop was Fromagerie Fritz Kaiser Inc., a cheese plant and dairy. Fritz Kaiser, Master cheese maker and leading pioneer in the creation of the Canadian "Raclette", specializes in the production of firm and semi-firm washed rind cheese. Situated in Noyan, QB, an agricultural center of the Richelieu valley, Fromagerie Fritz Kaiser benefits from the rich soil and quality local milk production.

Mr. Kaiser began crafting his cheeses in 1981 according to the traditions learned in his original home of Switzerland. Over the years, he has developed a large assortment of cheeses and presided over the growth of his Fromagerie. Mr. Kaiser's latest achievement, the Douanier cheese, is a washed rind

cheese with a distinctive line of vegetable ash running through the middle.

Next we headed over to Les Fraises de Louis Hébert in St. Valentin, QB. This family strawberry and raspberry farm has been in business for 45 years. They are pioneers in the field of self-pick or U-pick fruit farms. Visitors to Louis Hébert's can pick strawberries, raspberries and blueberries as well as purchase homemade pies, jams, jellies and of course, wine. In addition to the fruit fields, they also offer a visit to their small animal farm, and a guided tour of their on-farm winery. In 2003 Louis Hébert planted 4000 grape vines; their winery will soon include grape-based wines as well.

About that wine...Le Valentin is an alcoholic drink made from strawberries and raspberries. This sweet wine is best suited as an aperitif or digestive drink. It should be served chilled and it is suggested that you drink it with a frozen strawberry or raspberry. It is also excellent when drunk with a chocolate shooter (another locally made product). Le Valentin is a mistelle with 18% alcohol. Louis Hébert offers another alcoholic beverage called Le Louis Hébert. This is a strawberry/raspberry wine with 12% alcohol. This wine, I am told, is best served at a cool temperature and is very good with salmon and triple cream cheese.

Our third stop was at La Face Cachée de la Pomme where you can sample a taste of Québec's winter and warmth! La Face

*Continued on next page*



François Pouliot explaining how he makes his apple icewine.



These are the stainless steel vats where the Louis Hébert mistelle et Le Valentin are aged.



Visitors to La Face Cachée de la Pomme were able to sample the variety of wines this cidery offers for sale. Many took the opportunity to purchase product for the trip home.



Cabane à Sucre L'Hermine offers visitors everything from maple syrup to maple sugar and every possible product in between.



La Fromagerie Fritz Kaiser, milk house, cheese plant and retail outlet all located on the farm. La Fromagerie uses milk from their own herd as well as from surrounding farms in the region. Thus the cheese reflects the "terre roi" flavor of the land.



Cabane à Sucre L'Hermine uses reverse osmosis to remove as much water from the sap before it is sent to the evaporator. The water which is removed is held in a holding tank above the workshop. Once the season is over, the water which was evaporated from the sap is used to flush the system.

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Cachée de la Pomme means "the hidden side of the apple", which is a very applicable name since at this cidery they make apple ice wine or ice cider. The unique flavor of ice wine is born in January, when the orchards are cloaked in winter white. By a skillful method of slow fermentation, this naturally sweetened nectar develops a complex aroma of candied fruit and achieves the perfect balance between the tart and the mellow. The cidery's production has soared from 2,500 bottles in 1999 to 150,000 bottles of Neige in 2002.

Their marketing is well thought out and

very targeted. Owner François M. Pouliot says, "Whatever the best shop or best restaurant is in a city, that is where I want my wine to be. And that is the only place I want it." So far this has been working very well, as La Face Cachée de la Pomme has doubled production every year.

Next we headed for the bush, well the sugarcane that is. The proprietors of Cabane à Sucre L'Hermine (Sugarhouse) are Master sugar producers and have an international reputation for excellence. This family business has been in operation since 1963. They make everything from maple syrup to maple sugar and all the stages of maple

products in between.

Located in the heart of century-old maples and the largest linden trees in Quebec, they have 110,000 taps every year. At L'Hermine you can take an educational tour, sample some products, buy the things you like or hold a wedding reception. And if a day is not long enough then you can spend the night at their inn and explore the bicycle paths amongst the trees.

Finally before we headed home we stopped at Boucherie Viau where you could purchase the "best old-fashioned cured ham," bacon, fresh cheese, locally made tortiere (meat pies) and a wide range of processed

meats from their home delicatessen.

#### WHAT DID WE LEARN?

The key theme running through our entire trip was this: Find what you do well, do it the best you can and market it as such. Maybe your motto is as simple as François Pouliot and you want your product not in every store or restaurant but the "best shop or restaurant". Then work to do so.

The success of these businesses is built upon a number of factors: marketing, quality product, strength of the agricultural industry of this area of Quebec and family. And their success did not come about overnight or without hard work and determination. It developed over-time. Each started with the same beginning. They had an excellent product to market and built from there.

The five farms that we visited are all relatively small farms. They are all family-owned and operated businesses, with less than 10 employees; generally most of the employees are family. Any products that are made on the farms utilize what is grown either on the farm itself or from the immediate surrounding area this enables the farms to capture the "terroir" or the flavor of the land in the products they are making.

The success of the Circuit du Paysan shows what can happen when individual businesses work together to attract tourists – and their dollars – to a rural area. Rather than viewing each other as competition, all the businesses participating in the circuit benefit from shared advertising and promotion.

Granted not all things are equal on both sides of the border. There are differences that will have an effect on the size and breadth of success; however, looking at the range of alternative agriculture that is going on north of the 49th Parallel may provide farmers to the south a bit of food for thought and fodder to grow ideas on. I would suggest taking a bit of a jaunt North of the 49th to gather some ideas for your business, and if you need a tour guide I would be more than happy to join you.

For more information about the Circuit du Paysan I would encourage readers to visit [www.circuitdupaysan.com](http://www.circuitdupaysan.com) or call 1-800-378-7648. They have a great map, which describes the various locations and the routes.

**Bernadette Logozar is Rural & Ag Economic Development Specialist with CCE of Franklin County. She can be reached at 518-483-7403 or [bel7@cornell.edu](mailto:bel7@cornell.edu).**

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## GRAZING

# Got Knapweed?

## Farmer unleashes sheep, weevils in SARE-funded study to control noxious pasture weeds

By Rebecca Schuelke

To curb brown knapweed and bedstraw in his hay fields, one Central New York farmer has tried intensive mowing, herbicides and liming.

Bob Huot of Columbus has released weevils, even a flock of sheep, in his experiments with conventional -- and less common -- methods to combat invasive weeds in his pastures.

Huot and his wife, Carol Kinne, raise dairy replacement heifers among the hills of Chenango County. In the past several years they have added to their resume a study in eliminating brown knapweed and bedstraw from their pastures, one whose results could someday help other farmers rid their land of these unwanted plants.

"I didn't know what knapweed was, but about five or six years ago I noticed there were these bales the heifers wouldn't eat -- unless the only other choice was stones," Huot said with a laugh. "When it dries, knapweed is like a thistle. I don't blame the heifers for not wanting to eat it.

"I knew I had to do something."

Brown knapweed, or *centaurea maculosa*, is a biennial that produces a purple flower in its second year. It develops thistles and dries brown by the end of the growing season, making it unpalatable to most livestock.

The more widespread bedstraw, or *galium*, is a green plant with many small, white flowers. Occasionally referred to as wild baby's breath, bedstraw is a low-grade forage that provides little nutrition to livestock.

### STUDY IN WEEDS

Huot first tried plowing up and reseeding the fields with the greatest brown knapweed growth, which seemed to work well at first. But, by the second and especially third year after reseeding, knapweed seemed to be back with a vengeance.

"I thought I could kill it off, but I was wrong. I probably created better growth conditions for knapweed by bringing up seed in the ground," Huot said.

Huot said he knew many in the agricultural community would recommend herbicides to get rid of the unwanted knapweed and bedstraw but, while not opposed, he is reluctant to use chemicals, partially out of concern they are not good for the environment and also because he worried plants will develop resistance to herbicides.

Instead, Huot decided to enlist some help. He contacted the Central New York Resource Conservation and Development Project, where Huot is a member of the board of the directors, and Cornell Cooperative Extension of Chenango County.

Huot and the agencies applied for and received a grant from Northeast SARE, or Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education, a program of the US Department of Agriculture.

The three-year project was awarded in the fall of 2003 and included \$7,800 to examine various methods that might destroy or prevent brown knapweed and bedstraw in hayfields.

The efforts explored on Huot's farm include application of broadleaf herbicides, liming, intensive mowing, intensive grazing and the introduction of weevils thought to feast on knapweed.

### WHOLE FARM

"My interest in this project is not just in controlling knapweed and bedstraw, but in looking at the whole farm ecosystem and how treatments affect it," said Phil Metzger, coordinator of Central New York Resource Conservation and Development.

Meztger described the knapweed and bedstraw project as biological monitoring, including examining the effects on nearby plants, soil quality, exposure to groundwater and more.

"The best method is not necessarily one that kills all the knapweed or bedstraw, if it leaves the ground bare or kills all the insects," he said. "We need to select treatments that control problem plants economically while maintaining groundcover to avoid re-infestation."

Huot raises approximately 60 heifers each year. He owns 215 acres at a main farm and another 93 acres at nearby site, and estimated that 45 percent of his land is in production, either as pasture or harvested in the form of approximately 10,000 square bales annually.

Since Huot and his wife do the bulk of the farm work themselves, they typically bale hay continuously throughout the summer. Hay baled at the end of summer seemed to contain more of the dried, mature knapweed that his heifers shunned.

"We see knapweed issues throughout the area," said Rebecca Hargrave, a horticulture and natural resources educator for Cornell Cooperative Extension of Chenango County and an advisor in the knapweed and bedstraw study.

Knapweed, thought to have originated in southeast Europe or southwest Asia, has been in the US for approximately 100 years, with higher concentrations of the weed in western states, including Montana. It's unclear how knapweed came to the US or Huot's farm in particular, though he speculated it might have come in through a hayseed source.

"Knapweed spreads quickly and produces a high number of seeds," Hargrave said. "Knapweed generally likes recently disturbed areas, which is why we see so much of it on roadsides."

Hargrave said she hadn't encountered another knapweed infestation as profuse as Huot's.

"Part of that could be because so much rural land is unused," she mused.

### RESULTS NOT IN

With one year still to go in the study, Huot and his technical advisers were not ready to draw conclusions about the best control methods, but they shared some of their early observations. Each method was tried on a different plot of land at the main farm. Although field sizes varied, they used approximately half-acre plots in hopes the results would be more apparent in smaller fields.



These Jersey heifers are part of a study that is exploring whether livestock can be used to curb problem plants when the animals are permitted to "overgraze" in small paddocks for short periods of time.



Bob Huot of Columbus inspects weevils munching on the flowers of brown knapweed, a weed that threatens to overrun the heifer grower's hay fields. Huot is leading a study to determine if weevils can be used to destroy or control the knapweed population.

**Herbicides:** Brand names Dicamba to combat knapweed and Crossbow to attack bedstraw have shown some success in lessening the weed populations, but neither chemical treatment has yet eliminated the problem plants, the group members said.

**Liming:** Working on the premise that the weeds might be drawn to greater or less quality soil, one test plot received a heavy dose of lime in an effort to increase soil's pH.

Huot said he was not surprised that lime has thus far not proved to be a deterrent.

"Everything grows better with lime, including knapweed and bedstraw," he chuckled.

**Mowing:** Huot has been experimenting with "over-mowing" areas with high bedstraw and knapweed infestation. He has devised a method of mowing four-acre plots once, two-thirds of the area twice and one third of the area three times.

Although steady mowing is a fairly tried and true means of ridding unwanted plants, Huot observed, his attempts so far have not eliminated either knapweed or bedstraw.

**Grazing:** Huot has experimented with fencing sheep and dairy heifers in smaller-than-usual paddocks, employ-

ing the belief that over-eating within a confined area may eliminate weeds. On the same line of thought, some have speculated that additional traffic from the animals' hooves within small paddocks may help snub out certain plants.

"Both heifers and sheep will eat knapweed's blossoms and the soft, upper stems. They will eat it when it's younger and fresher," Huot said. "It's a form of control (over the weeds), but it won't get rid of them. The drawback to intensive grazing is, of course, the animals eat the more desirable plants to the ground. They are fatiguing the grasses."

*Continued on next page*

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**STEWARDSHIP AND NATURE**

# A Tale of Two Farmers

## Tapping USDA's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

By Karen Clifford

Maintaining water quality and avoiding filtration is a high priority for New York City. In an effort to encourage farmers in the NYC Watershed to further protect the water flowing through their farms on its way to the NYC reservoirs, the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) was initiated here in 1998. Since then over 130 watershed landowners have signed contracts with the USDA to establish almost 2000 acres of riparian forest buffers protecting over 140 miles of streambank. This is the tale of two farms' experiences with CREP.

Donald and Joanne Hosking have been running a 150 cow dairy farm in Hobart, NY for 20 years. Their farm consists of approximately 160 acres owned and rented. Joanne is very particular about her

farm and keeps it neat and orderly. Animal health and wildlife habitat are very important to the Hoskings. When they heard about the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) they liked the concept and began working with their whole farm planning team to enroll in the program to create a 22.3 acre riparian forest buffer.

The Hoskings CREP plan was complex. A watering system involving the construction of two ponds was developed to ensure a sufficient supply of water for the animals. A half mile livestock laneway, a mile and a

half of high tensile fence and 12 acres of tree and shrub planting had to be coordinated as not to create excessive hardships on the animals or the farm operation. The project was fully completed this past July, a little more than two years after the planning began.

Don is very happy with the program. "The water system works very well, the cows always have plenty of good water to drink," he says. "The animal trail has needed some repair from heavy storm runoff but is holding up well. The trees and shrubs are doing fantastic, some are up to five feet tall already and there has been an increase in song birds and other wildlife in the area."

"But the biggest benefit is the improvement in animal health. Since the animals have been out of the wet swampy areas they have not had any hoof problems, including foot wart, or any incidences of mastitis."

"There have been some operational changes due to the installation of the buffer. We did not realize how much feed the cows were actually getting off of the buffer area, so we had to increase their feed considerably while they were in the barn for milking."

Don continued, "We first thought this was a problem, but using the rental payment received for the CREP land, good bottom land is rented to grow corn on. The production on the newly rented land is at least double what the amount produced on the CREP land, and it is keeping this very productive land in agriculture. The cows have adjusted, now instead of having to go out and bring the cows in for milking, they are already at the barn waiting for me".

For the Hoskings the CREP has improved their entire farm operation from both a water quality and herd health perspective.

Randy and Lucci Kelly have a slightly different reason for enrolling over four acres of riparian forest buffer in the CREP. Randy is a forester by trade, therefore, trees and water quality are what are really important to him. Randy and Lucci wanted to enhance their property and help maintain good water quality for the future. Randy raises Scottish Highlanders and said "they love to be cool especially when it is hot out and with the new spring development the animals have more water to drink than they know what to do with".

Lucci also speaks highly of CREP, saying, "the program is very important to the small farmer. It enables us to do our part for the environment and be a better steward of the land by managing our stock better".

Randy has a vision of what he wants the buffer area to look like in 50 to 60 years. Along with maintaining the trees and shrubs planted to establish the buffer, Randy is continuing to plant a variety of species within the buffer to develop an arboretum for future generations.



Don and Joanne take great pride in their farm and animals.



Randy proudly shows off an Atlantic Cypress which he has added to the buffer.



The Hosking's cows are proud to do their part to protect their country's water quality.

**Continued from prev. page**

In Huot's tests, four heifers ran through a half-acre paddock in two weeks. Six sheep could graze the same size area for a week or two longer, he said.

**Biological control:** Perhaps the more uncommon form of pest control Huot has employed is the introduction this spring of weevil larvae.

Blunt Knapweed Flower Weevil and the Knapweed Root Weevil were purchased from Biological Control of Weeds, a Bozeman, Mont. firm.

The flower weevils have been spotted feeding on knapweed.

"They are eating, which is a good sign," Metzger said, adding that it is too soon to determine if the weevils are eating enough to make a dent in the weed population.

**LOOKING AHEAD**

Those involved in the knapweed and bedstraw project said they hoped their work would be helpful in finding a solution that other farmers might be able to use.

"Our three-year analysis will not just consider how much knapweed and bedstraw was eliminated in each test, but will look at the larger picture," Metzger said. "How many other plants were eliminated? What is the insect count in that plot? How much bare ground has been created by this method?" Hargrave said she was especially intrigued by the weevil and the idea of biological control, but said she hoped the study would provide an answer that is not too costly or labor intensive for the average farmer.

"We hope we can find a realistic practice that the farmer could do," Hargrave said. "So many of the current recommendations have to do with costly spraying, mowing 12 times per year or other measures. We need a solution for organic farmers and those that do not want to put chemicals on their fields."

**Rebecca Schuelke is a member of the editorial team of Small Farms Quarterly and is employed by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Chenango County.**

"It is important to reforest the streams and utilize the land for what it is best, attracting a variety of wildlife, not only game species like rabbit, grouse, and deer but also song birds. The buffer has to be something you believe in, not just plant and forget about."

In the NYC Watershed, CREP is jointly funded by the USDA Farm Service Agency and the Watershed Agricultural Council, which receives major funding from the City of New York.

For more information on the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program please contact you local County Soil and Water Conservation District, USDA Farm Service Agency or USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

**Karen Clifford is the Riparian Buffer Coordinator with the Delaware County Soil and Water Conservation District and can be contact by phone at 607-865-7090 or via email at karen-clifford@ny.nacdnet.org.**



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**NEW FARMERS****My (New) Life as a Farmer**

By Karen Skrill

*"Jan. 31, 2000. This afternoon I was starting the chores by myself. Stewart was working on something else. Just before starting to throw hay into one sheep pen, I noticed a very small white movement in the pen. At closer inspection, I discovered the tiniest lamb I have ever seen standing alone in the midst of what was giant sheep compared to this tiny creature. The first thing I did was to get one of the portable pens called "jugs" for the new lamb and its mom. Once that was in place I picked up the lamb for an inspection. It was a perfectly formed and healthy ewe lamb, but not any bigger than a couple of pounds of butter. At first I could not find the mom, because there was no one attending the lamb, but it had been cleaned and was dry. When I took the baby over to the jug, a small ewe came over, crying for its baby. I reunited the two of them in the pen and went to get water for the mom. Then Stewart arrived. It was the smallest lamb he had seen as well. He made sure it was nursing and OK before we continued with chores."*

The above entry from my journal was written one and a half years after my arrival in Vermont and the start of my new life as a farmer. I remember when I first moved here from southwestern Ontario in 1998, that Vermont seemed like stepping back in time about 80 years. The people were friendly, but it didn't take me very long to find out that there was a definite difference between true Vermonters and "flatlanders" like me.

Fortunately, the local people did not hold that against me and welcomed me into the community. I joined the Grange and found it was a great place to meet and socialize with neighbors that I normally would rarely see. When you live on a farm you quickly learn that trips into town were on an "as needed" basis, and not recreation.

This whole lifestyle was completely new to me, a city girl from Canada. I always enjoyed the surprised reactions I got when asked why I came from Canada to the middle of Vermont. I explained that I met my farmer-husband, Stewart, on the Internet.

At 52 I had found myself divorced, struggling to make a living on my own, and tired of the hidden agendas and political games of the singles scene in city life. I remembered that all my life I have known farmers and they always seemed to be sincere, real people, so I decided that it was time to meet a farmer. I signed on to the Internet and went searching. I found a web site called "Ag Singles". It was free so I posted a little bit about myself and within a couple of days I received two replies. One was from a man in Idaho and one was from Stewart in Vermont.

While I corresponded with both men, it was Stewart who wrote to me more often and soon we were also speaking on the phone as well. We communicated by email so often that I filled two three-ring binders with copies of our notes before I actually decided to accept his invitation to come to Vermont to meet him.

My friends were dismayed that I would travel so far to meet a man that I did not know. "You don't know, he could be an axe murderer," one friend advised me. But we had talked and written so much that I was comfortable with the plan. I found out later that Stewart's best friends also told him, "She could be an axe murderer!" We had a good laugh about that.

When I made the decision to move here to Vermont, I packed up what little I could stuff into my station wagon and small "pop-up" camper, and left my house in Canada in the



"You're never too old to make changes in your life if you really want to," says author Karen Skrill, shown here with husband Stewart.



View of the valley from our hayfield.



Some of our 100 ewes and lambs feeding from a round bale feeder in the corral beside the barn. The lamb on top is playing King of the Hill.



Giant pumpkins were fun to try, but now we stick to garlic, tomatoes and cucumbers.

care of my oldest daughter. While I do miss Canada, and my family, I am really enjoying my life here on the farm. It is such a different way of life, but a much more free and healthy life. With all the new skills that I have learned from Stewart and the farm, I have learned that it is possible to sustain myself if I need to. And I have learned that, indeed, people here are "real, and sincere."

We raise sheep, breed working dogs, grow garlic and other garden crops that I enjoy selling at the farmers markets. In 2000 we joined Vermont Quality Meats Cooperative and have since been getting the best price for our lambs that we have ever gotten, and all year long as well.

In the first few years we tried growing the usual variety of vegetables to sell, but eventually settled down to just the garlic and cucumbers and tomatoes that I pickle. I

make a garlic jelly that I have found to be a very good seller. We try to keep our products unusual and have developed a very small niche market.

Most of Vermont's farmers markets require that what you sell, you produce, so I also grow our own herbs that I use in making the pickled green tomatoes. I make an old traditional cucumber pickle called Tongue Pickles which uses the older, yellow cucumbers that I would not use for the regular varieties of sour pickles that I make.

Two years ago, we loaded up our one ton truck with all the wool we had stored in the barn and I drove to Prince Edward Island to MacAusland's Woolen Mills and had blankets made. We have been selling them at the farmers markets and on the Internet through a web site called Local Harvest ([www.localharvest.org](http://www.localharvest.org)).

We also developed a web site for the farm, which is named Bulrush Farm after the Morgan stallion Bulrush Morgan. The stories say that he was sired on our farm to a mare owned by Moses Belknap by Justin Morgan's stallion, Figure.

Life here has been good, but hard work. There are always unexpected things happening; some good, some not so good. Like the time a hired hand was bringing a round bale down the road and a tractor tire blew, swinging the tractor off the side of the road. Stewart was away, and with both of us being new to farming, we were not sure what to do. I called the local tractor repair dealer and was told that if I could get the tire off the tractor and bring it to them, they could fix it.

Well, just as I was going to the garage to get a jack, a friend, Mike McPhetres who fixes tractors for a living drove in the yard. He made short work out of taking off that tire. I asked him later what brought him to the farm and he said Stewart had mentioned that one of the tractors needed work. Similar events have happened several times, so are always thankful when our guardian angels are on the job. I have learned that it can be very expensive to keep the equipment on a farm repaired and you really need to be a Jack-of-all-trades.

One surprise for me is that it really is very nice to work outside. I used to sit in an office and look out the window at men working on the railroad that ran past my workplace and think that I would never want to have to work outside in all the unpleasant weather. After coming to the farm and actually working outside in all kinds of weather I now know why people choose those jobs. As long as you are dressed for the weather, the rewards far outweigh the discomforts. I also found that my back no longer bothers me because I am not sitting in a chair eight hours a day.

It has been good, but now, at ages 60 and 71, we find that the farm is beginning to be too much for us to work by ourselves, and we don't make enough to pay a hired hand on a steady basis. We have to make changes from what we would like to do, to something we can do. None of our family members are interested in farming, so we are going over our options.

Meanwhile, the farm is up for sale but the location is too beautiful for us to want to live elsewhere so we are looking at dividing the farm so that we can build and stay here. We have gotten too used to looking down the valley each morning and wondering at God's handiwork, ever changing and awe inspiring.

**Karen Skrill farms with her husband Stewart in Randolph Center, Vermont.**

## COWS AND CROPS

## Regenerative Farming – What's in Your Wallet?

By Bill Henning

When will it take more than a barrel of oil in energy to extract a barrel of oil from the earth? According to James Howard Kunstler, author of *The Long Emergency: Surviving the Converging Catastrophes of the 21st Century*, that just might happen sooner than we think.

The logic is that the world is very close to its peak oil withdrawals, no new significant discoveries have occurred since before 2003, and no more significant discoveries are expected. The oil that was the easiest to get has been gotten. The remaining oil will be increasingly more difficult to obtain.

Furthermore, as third world countries continue to develop the demand for oil is going to expand dramatically. China is an excellent example. The agricultural ramifications are enormous for much of our current farming practices rely heavily on the petroleum industry.

Regenerative farming offers us some useful alternatives to lessen oil dependency. Regenerative farming need not be organic, although the two terms are often considered synonymous. You don't have to be organic to include some regenerative practices on your farm. You can still gain benefits.

The following covers some of the gleanings from a July 22, 2005 Rodale Institute Field Day in Kutztown, PA. Staff at the Rodale Institute, faculty from Pennsylvania State University, and researchers from the USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS) provided information.

## FARMING SYSTEMS COMPARISON

For about twenty years three farming systems have been compared at the Rodale Institute: conventional, non-animal regenerative, and animal regenerative. The crops considered included corn, soybeans, and oats. The conventional system uses conventional inputs. Non-animal regenerative uses legumes as a nitrogen source. Animal regenerative uses composted manure.

Yields of the three systems have been comparable. In stress conditions the regenerative farming systems out yielded conventional farming. It was also found that corn can take a 4,000 lb. DM /acre weed load before showing any effect on yield.

Transitioning to regenerative farming has often been associated with yield reduction. Rodale has found that this is usually due to a lack of nitrogen. They recommend start-

ing with crops that are less nitrogen sensitive like legume hay crops.

After a few years of regenerative production, yields increase. Rodale's yield averages usually meet, or exceed, the yield averages within the county. The regenerative systems consume 30% less energy and only require a 6% price advantage to cover the added expense. Considering that certified organic production usually commands a price premium of from 35 to 140% the systems are proving to pay for the extra effort.

The question of soil phosphorus (P) accumulation arose. The Rodale staff said they have not specifically studied P accumulation but do have a somewhat elaborate system for monitoring ground water. Even though considerable P additions have been made via compost to soils that already had high P levels, ground water analyses have indicated safe P levels by EPA standards.

## BIOLOGICAL NO-TILL FARMING

Using a specially designed chevron configured roller in front of a tractor that is also pulling a modified no-till drill, Rodale has successfully no-tilled soybeans following small grains without chemicals. Small grains, when killed and knocked down for mulch, suppress weed competition. The roller kills the small grain plant when applied at the flowering stage.

Three small grains have been compared: oats, wheat, and rye. The oats gave the poorest results and the rye gave the best, actually rather good, results. The rye provided the most straw and also the most organic matter. Organic matter in the soil is fairly close to double the carbon content. Carbon to nitrogen ratios ran 20:1, 30:1, and 40:1 for oats, wheat, and rye respectively. The nitrogen content of the three straws does not vary greatly. While the rye provided the most straw, it also provided the most carbon.

## TILLAGE TIMING

At any given time we have a seed bank in our soils. For the most part those are weed seeds and only about ten percent of them express themselves through growth above the soil surface. That leaves 90 % of the seeds lying dormant below the soil surface just waiting for the right opportunity for expression.

Rodale tilled ground that had a uniform cropping history. They tilled different plots in intervals two weeks apart. Different weed populations grew in each plot. While



Chevron roller for biological no-till. From left to right: oat straw, wheat straw, rye straw.

not a controlled experiment, it does indicate that we might be able to control a weed population that would be more compatible with a certain crop if we can time our tillage practices appropriately.

Seed exposure to light was also addressed during this session. Weed seeds have the ability to determine when the environmental conditions are just right for germination and exposure to even a nanosecond of light is enough to trigger the process. This exposure to light can occur during tillage or cultivation. As a result it has been determined that tillage at night, without tractor lights, using night vision goggles, can reduce weed populations.

Rodale also found that later plantings often did not hurt yields, and sometimes-increased yields, due to less competitive suppression from weeds.

## ENHANCING SOIL NUTRIENT EXTRACTION AND SOIL STRUCTURE

Arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi (AMF) are ancient microorganisms that have evolved to aid plants absorb nutrients from the soil. They especially help in the uptake of less mobile nutrients like phosphorus. Most plants are mycorrhizal, that is, they can take advantage of AMF.

AMF have hair like projections called hyphae. Hyphae grow up to two inches beyond the nutrient depletion area around the root zone accessing more soil and allowing the plant to acquire nutrients more efficiently. Hundreds of yards of hyphae can grow within a teaspoon of soil.

In the early 1990s the USDA identified a compound called glomalin on the hyphae of AMF. Glomalin acts like bark on a tree to keep water and nutrients from getting lost on their way to and from the plant. Glomalin is very tough. It can last anywhere from 10 to 50 years in the soil.

When a hypha stops transporting nutrients, the glomalin from that hypha is available to the surrounding soil. Remaining hyphae act as a frame on which soil particles can collect while the glomalin available to the soil glues the particles together, thus form-

ing and stabilizing aggregates of soil. Highly aggregated soils are more porous and less prone to erosion.

The USDA/ARS lists these considerations concerning Arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi (AMF):

AMF benefits crops by:

- Increasing a plant's uptake of nutrients
- Increasing a plant's disease resistance
- Enhancing a plant's ability to grow in drought conditions
- Improving soil structure around root zones

AMF benefits farms by:

- Decreasing input costs
- Increasing crop yields
- Improving the environment

Seven steps to cultivate your soil's native AMF populations

- Eliminate phosphorus fertilizers
- Don't till more than necessary
- Don't let fields lie fallow over winter
- Do plant cover crops
- Do develop a diverse crop rotation
- Do grow crops that support AMF
- Do relax a bit on weed control

## SO WHAT IS IN YOUR WALLET?

No doubt there are some who have read this and thought, "what a bunch of radical hogwash." Almost all of us have only experienced a world full of cheap energy and wondrous technology. Much of that technology is itself highly energy dependent. What we have experienced has only existed, for the most part, for less than 70 years out the eons of the earth's history. It is the culture in this time period that has indeed been radical.

The real currency of life is energy. Regenerative farming just might be the key to what we do keep in our wallets.

**Bill Henning and his wife Kathleen operate a grass-based beef and sheep farm in the Finger Lakes region of New York. He is also the Small Farms Specialist with Pro-Dairy/CCE-NWNY Dairy, Livestock, and Field Crops Team.**



The plot on the left was tilled two weeks after the plot on the right. That is the only management difference. The weed on the right is fox tail. Pig weed is on the left.



## COMMUNITY/WORLD

# Women Farmers' Network Launched in Western Massachusetts

By Madeleine Charney

It was a steamy summer evening at the Whately, Massachusetts town hall when seventy-five women gathered for the first meeting of "Women in Agriculture" on July 27th. "No matter," said Mary L. Peabody, keynote speaker, referring to the nearly 100-degree weather, "we're farmers!" Her light-hearted dismissal was met with a round of laughter and the evening was off to an energized and productive start.

Earlier, the energy in the room had already been palpable as the group filed in and joined the potluck line. Fresh, local food was served up as the women perused a table laden with literature and found seats strategically arranged in clusters. Old friends greeted one another as new contacts were made with handshakes and the exchanging of business cards. Group introductions revealed a wide range of operations and experience.

## THE NEED

The meeting was inspired and organized by Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture (CISA), a non-profit organization based in South Deerfield, Massachusetts. CISA's mission is to sustain agriculture by building a secure local food and farming system, strengthening relationships between consumers and farmers, increasing farm profitability, promoting environmental sustainability, preserving rural communities, and ensuring that fresh, healthy, locally grown food is available, affordable and accessible to everyone.

Therese Fitzsimmons, Coordinator for CISA's Women in Agriculture Program, oversees a community outreach project funded by the USDA's Risk Management Agency. The project includes a formal mentoring program. However, when Fitzsimmons directly queried women farmers about how CISA could assist them, she heard their repeated request for an informal counterpart, a forum in which to share hands-on learning and visit one another's operations.

"About twenty of the women farmers spoke of their positive experiences with business networks," explained Fitzsimmons. These networks provided the women with speedy and relevant answers to the questions they tossed into the ring.

It seemed like a natural step to form a network that addresses specific farming needs and allows women to gather and pool their knowledge base, and so Fitzsimmons was happy to organize this successful initial meeting. A second meeting of CISA's "Women in Agriculture" network was held on September 21st with plans for meeting every other month.

## THE WAGN MODEL

As Director of the Women's Agricultural Network (WAGN) in Vermont, Peabody was a logical choice to jumpstart this new networking opportunity for women farmers in the region. WAGN, a collaborative effort of the University of Vermont Extension System, University of Vermont's Center for Sustainable Agriculture, and the USDA, provides education and technical assistance to individuals starting or enhancing farms and ag-related businesses.

WAGN offers a series of educational, technical assistance, and networking opportuni-



Mary Peabody of Vermont Women in Agriculture Network (WAGN)



Participants in the July Women in Agriculture network meeting in Deerfield, Mass.



CISA Board Chair Faye Omasta, right, chats with Therese Fitzsimmons, Coordinator of CISA's Women in Agriculture. All photos by Kelly Coleman.

ties. From developing and assessing a business idea through the advanced planning and implementation phases, WAGN offers a program to support and encourage these varying levels.

The WAGN vision is to increase the number of women owning/operating profitable farms and ag-related businesses and their profile in leadership positions throughout the agricultural sectors of business, government and community. Peabody's rousing presentation provided fertile ground for the seeds of such a network in Western Massachusetts.

## WOMEN FARMERS ON THE RISE

Peabody centered her talk on some remarkable statistics. "Yes, there really are more women farmers," she declared. Quoting from the USDA 2002 Census of Agriculture, she pointed out that in 1982 there were 121,599 farms and ranches with women as principal operators. Compare that with 237,819 principal operators in 2002. That's nearly a 100% increase in only twenty years! She then went on to illuminate some of the origins of these changes.

New recruits (women 18-30), mid-life career changers, and family matriarchs are on the rise. Combined with changing purchasing patterns, consumer behavior, and economic conditions, this complex scenario becomes clearer. Women's farms tend to be small (35% are between 10-49 acres), diversified, sustainable/organic, a part-time vocation, value-added, direct marketed, and less mechanized than the average farm.

Women's farms also have a larger portion of their farms in the lower sales classes than men operators. Why is this? What are

the barriers?

Peabody's research shows that setting smaller goals, limited connections, physical limitations, less confidence with tools/equipment, limited access to programs, risk aversion, and a social perception that farmers are men contribute to women farmers' lower economic gain.

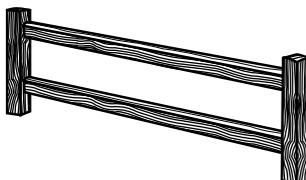
The obvious question then is how to dissolve these barriers.

The obvious answer: With networks such as WAGN and "Women in Agriculture." These networks, according to Peabody, provide a "safe" place to learn and explore, support systems, reality checks to dispel isolation, stories and information, a way to foster creativity, and a community with whom to celebrate. "Women know how to celebrate!" she reiterated. Case in point -- the smiles and conversation sustained as the women filed outside and made their way down the road for a tour of a local woman's farm.

To find out more about Women's Agricultural Network (WAGN) in Vermont, contact Mary L. Peabody at (866) 860-1382 extension x13 or mary.peabody@uvm.edu, or visit [www.uvm.edu/wagn](http://www.uvm.edu/wagn).

For more information about Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture and its new Women In Agriculture network, call the CISA office at (866) 965-7100 or visit <http://buylocalfood.com>.

Madeleine Charney is Informational Resources Manager with the New England Small Farm Institute in Belchertown, Massachusetts.



## Resource Spotlight Women in Sustainable Agriculture Conference Oct 21-23

The 2005 Women in Sustainable Agriculture Conference will bring together farmers, educators, and activists involved in sustainable agriculture to share educational and organization strategies, build technical and business skills, and address policy issues all aimed at expanding the success of women in sustainable agriculture. The gathering, to be held in Burlington, Vermont, will work to set the agenda for the next decade of supporting women in agriculture.

- **Who?** Farmers, ranchers, growers, service providers, educators, social and political activists, and those who care about food, fiber and the natural world.

- **Why?** To honor the role of women in agriculture, to celebrate the power of women's networks to create change and to plant the seeds for future work.

- **Happenings?** A sensory feast... Speakers to capture your imagination... Workshops to engage your hands and mind... Art to delight your spirit... Networking to stimulate your creativity... Activities to nurture the child within and... Locally grown food that celebrates the bounty of the season.

Register online at [www.uvm.edu/wagn/womeninag.html](http://www.uvm.edu/wagn/womeninag.html) or by calling the Women's Agricultural Network at (802) 223-2389 ext 15.

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**NEW FARMERS**

# Weathering A Dairy Start-Up: Ortman Dairy

By Bill Van Loo

**The Transition**

After 30 years of working in the newspaper industry, Loren Ortman started dairying in 1999 with his wife, Cynthia. Tending dairy cattle wasn't new to the Brasher Falls, N.Y., couple. They had raised and sold heifers for several years.

When reorganization in his industry forced the career change, Loren originally planned to run a conventional dairy. He and Cynthia remodeled their tiestall barn and seeded their pastures to annual Italian ryegrass. But it took only two years and an entire silo full of moldy silage to convince the couple that rotational grazing and baleage feeding was a better dairy strategy.

The couple switched to rotational grazing and stopped growing corn. To keep investment low, the Ortman partners with their neighbors to put up baleage for the winter. In 2004, they planted brown midrib sorghum Sudan to feed during the summer pasture slump. Yields were quite acceptable.

**MECHANICS, MANAGEMENT & RESOURCES**

The transition to full-time dairying was difficult, and the lack of cash sometimes strained the Ortman's relationship. Cynthia now works part time off the farm to supplement the farm's income.

In spite of cash-flow gaps early on, the couple has stuck to the goal of paying off debt and fixing production problems. In retrospect, the Ortman's say just "taking the plunge" was the most difficult part.

For help during their transition, the Ortman's relied on the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Cornell Cooperative Extension, neighbors, their veterinarian, their nutritionist, and lots of books and magazines.

Much of what Loren learned, he taught himself. He wishes there could have been some sort of mentoring program to help them through the first couple of years getting started.

To track their progress, the Ortman's watch their debt closely. They have an Excel spreadsheet ledger as well as Quickbooks to keep their records.

**THE FUTURE**

The Ortman's have aggressive plans for their dairy. To begin with, they plan to be debt free in five years. They also plan to improve all their paddocks, build soil fertility, expand to 60 cows, and install a pasture watering system and, eventually, irrigation.

Reaching these goals, the Ortman's say, will help them achieve their most important objectives: to grow equity while raising their family on a farm.

**TRANSITION TIPS**

The Ortman's, who are more than willing to talk about their transition experience with other farmers, have this advice:

- Get advice from a reliable source. Then follow it.
- Open your mind to new ideas.
- Be willing to admit that you may be wrong every now and then.
- Don't take the easy way to pay bills. That is, don't use credit cards or sell assets to cash flow your farm.

**Bill Van Loo is an agriculture and rural economic vitality educator with Cornell Cooperative Extension of St. Lawrence County. This article is one of twelve in the new "Profiles of Successful Strategies for Small Dairy Farms" publication from the Northern New York Agricultural Development Program (NNYADP). Other profiles are online at [www.nnyagdev.org](http://www.nnyagdev.org).**

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The Ortman family (l to r): Loren, Michael, Cynthia, and Mallory. Loren and Cynthia's daughter, Lindsay, is missing from this family photo. Photographer: Joe Danko

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**FOOD FOR THOUGHT****A Beetle on the Bush**

By Martha Goodsell

I said to my two oldest children that it would be good for them to get some off-our-own-farm employment for the summer so that they could have the experience of working for someone else. A friend and fellow farmer conveniently located just down the road agreed to hire them...as blueberry pickers.

As it happened there were a few days when the orders at the local farm-stands were more than the two of them could pick in a day and so I agreed to help them out. We were paid by the pound and if we picked right along the pay was good, nearly as much as I earn sitting at my desk all day (which I ended up doing at night). I was thrilled to have the opportunity because I actually love picking blueberries. I can't hear the phone ringing or my computer announcing "You've got mail". It's quiet, it's peaceful and it gives me lots of time to think. So I journeyed to the berry field where I walked down memory lane, caught up with my kids, and listened to the latest news. It was greatly needed therapy.

As a kid my mother would pack my brother, my sister and me into the station wagon along with pails, baskets and tins and off we would go to her father's blueberry fields in Northern Pennsylvania. It seemed like hours to get there, and even longer having

to wait for my mother and grandmother to pick until all of their containers were full. With fifty acres of high bush blueberries it would seem like they would have a winter's worth of berries with just one trip and there would be no need for a return trip back to Clark Summit. But we traveled south at least once a week during blueberry season. As we got older the trip grew shorter and we no longer imitated the "kerplink, kerplank, kerplop" of Blueberry Sal. Now it was an outright competition: who would fill their pail the first, who would clean a bush the fastest or who would pick the most pounds in a day. Blueberry picking grew serious.

But it wasn't my competitive nature that drew me back to the berry fields. It was the tranquility. I was able to relax and took the opportunity to really connect with my kids with no distractions and no interruptions. We worked and we talked and we worked and we talked some more. The subjects were endless and we talked for hours about their after-work plans with their friends, their friends, their dreams, my dreams, their work, my work, our work, the drought, the birds, the bees and the beetles, and of course the blueberries.

But so too did the u-pickers who came on weekends. The blueberry field is big enough to require a couple of pickers but small enough to eavesdrop on nearly every conversation. It wasn't like I was a fly on

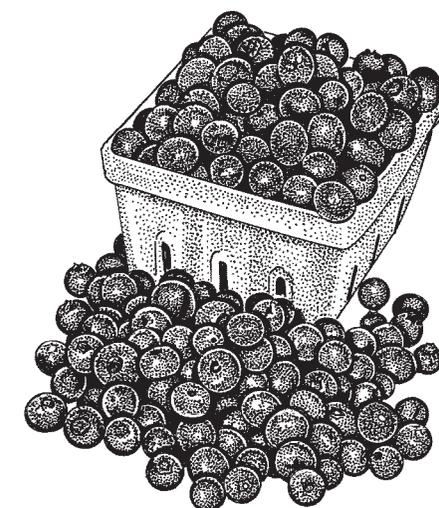
the wall, it was more like a beetle on the bush, a blueberry bush that is. Everyone discussed the blueberries: too tart, too sweet, not ripe enough, not blue enough, not large enough. The complaints seemed endless but everyone ate and picked just the same. A doctor lectured about the health benefits of blueberries to the friends he had brought into the field. A few home-steaders commented about small farms and sustainable agricultural practices. Others talked about organic systems and spraying and wondered aloud what the rest of the world was putting on their crops and commented how they would rather go hungry than to have to eat residues. A couple traveling from China who had never before eaten blueberries visited the field and they spent their time eating as opposed to picking. Older women talked about canning and preserving and shared with each other their favorite blueberry recipes. Young mothers encouraged their children to pick. And just once I heard the "kerplink, kerplank, kerplop" as one mother recited Blueberry Sal while her son and husband picked along side. I envisioned Little Bear and Little Sal sitting under the bushes on that hot July day.

"How would you like to pick berries for a living?" one friend asked another. I never did hear his answer because I was thinking 'I would love it.' I thought about the immigrants who travel thousands of miles to pick. I thought about how much they must really love their work. I thought about the labor issues and all the controversy I hear

and I wondered to myself 'Are those who are reporting really listening. If I like picking, aren't there others who enjoy it as well? Why is it hard for others to accept physical work as enjoyable?'

'Maybe' I thought 'it's time we all visit the berry fields and become for a while, a beetle on the bush.'

**Martha Goodsell raises 1,700 deer and other livestock on a 425-acre grass-based farm in Candor, N.Y. with the help of her husband and four children. She is also the Executive Director of NY Farms!, a statewide coalition of organizations, individuals, businesses, agencies and institutions committed to the future of New York's farms and families.**

**HOME & FAMILY****Is Pink Turkey Meat Safe?**

By Carole Fisher

The color pink in cooked turkey meat raises a "red flag" for many diners and cooks. Conditioned to be wary of cooked fresh pork that looks pink, they question the safety of cooked poultry and other meats that have a rosy blush.

The color of cooked meat and poultry is not always a sure sign of its degree of doneness. Only by using a food thermometer can you accurately determine that meat has reached a safe temperature. Turkey, fresh pork, ground beef or veal can remain pink even after cooking to temperatures of 160° F and higher. The meat of smoked turkey is always pink.

To understand some of the causes of "pinkening" or "pinkening" in fresh turkey, it's important to know first what gives meat its natural color.

**WHY IS POULTRY LIGHTER IN COLOR THAN BEEF?**

The protein myoglobin is the major pigment that determines meat color. The main reason that poultry meat is lighter in color than beef is that it is dramatically lower in myoglobin. Also, as an animal becomes older, its myoglobin content usually increases. Turkeys today are young – 4 to 5 months old at the time of slaughter.

**WHY ARE WHITE AND DARK MEAT OF POULTRY DIFFERENT COLORS?**

CISA and other organizations, farms, and businesses in Western Massachusetts

**MOFGA Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association**

<http://www.mofga.org/events.html>  
Training, conferences, classes, and committees in Maine and the Northeast

**New Jersey Department of Agriculture, New and Aspiring Farmers: Calendar of Upcoming Workshops and Events**

<http://www.state.nj.us/agriculture/sadc/new-farmercalendar.htm>  
Workshops and events of interest to new farmers in New Jersey

**New York Farms!**

<http://www.nyfarms.info/calendar.html>  
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**Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance (NODPA)**

<http://www.nodpa.com/events.html>

This is also due primarily to the oxygen-storing myoglobin which is located in the muscle cells. Muscles that are exercised frequently and strenuously – such as the legs – need more oxygen, and contain more myoglobin than muscles needing little oxygen. Turkeys do a lot of standing around, but little if any flying, so their wing and breast muscles are white, while their legs are dark.

**WHAT CAUSES WELL-DONE MEAT TO BE PINK?**

There are several possible reasons for this. Chemical changes can occur in the meat during cooking that may cause a pink or red color. The presence of nitrates and nitrites either in the feed or water supply at the poultry farm can cause a pink color in the meat.

Often meat of younger birds shows the most pink because their thinner skins per-

mit oven gases to reach the flesh. There they react with hemoglobin in the meat to cause a pink tinge. The amount of fat in the skin also affects the amount of pink color.

**HOW TO TEST FOR DONENESS:**

The best way to be sure a turkey – or any meat – is cooked safely and is done is to use a food thermometer. If the temperature of the turkey as measured in the thigh has reached 180° F and is done to family preference, all the meat – including any that remains pink – is safe to eat.

**Carole Fisher is a Community Educator with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County. Reprinted with permission from Food & Family Well-Being, Spring 2005. Reprinted with permission from Food & Family Well-Being, Fall/Winter 2004**

**Resource Spotlight****Workshops for Beginning Farmers**

What better way to develop farming skills than by learning alongside others? Each year in our region there are literally hundreds of workshops, farm tours, and conferences that can help you learn how to become a better farmer. We can't possibly print them all in Small Farm Quarterly. Here are some good online Events Calendars that you can refer to:

**ATTRA: National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service**

<http://attra.ncat.org/calendar/index.php/2005/07/>

National events with some taking place in the Northeast

**Community Involved in Supporting Agriculture (CISA)**

<http://www.buylocalfood.com/events.html>  
Local farm and food events sponsored by

Discussions, gatherings, workshops, field days, and pasture walks.

**Northeast Organic Farming Association (NOFA) - Massachusetts**

<http://www.nofamass.org/calendar/index.php>  
Tours, gatherings, workshops, and presentations around Massachusetts

**Northeast Organic Farming Association (NOFA) - New Hampshire**

<http://www.nofanh.org/calendar.html>  
Tours, gatherings, workshops, and presentations around New Hampshire

**Northeast Organic Farming Association (NOFA) - Vermont**

<http://www.nofavt.org/calendar.php>  
Tours, gatherings, workshops, and presentations around Vermont

**Pennsylvania Association for Organic Agriculture**

<http://www.pasafarming.org/eventCalendar.html>

Field days, programs, conferences, workshops, and gatherings throughout Pennsylvania

**South Central New York Agriculture Team**

<http://www.cce.cornell.edu/scnyag/events/>  
Events of interest to agricultural producers, horticulturists, and rural land owners in South Central New York

**University of Vermont Center for Sustainable Agriculture**

<http://www.uvm.edu/~susagctr/sp99calendar.html>  
Events in Vermont and throughout New England

**The Women's Agricultural Network**

<http://www.uvm.edu/wagn/calendar.html>  
Emphasizes the business aspects of farming, including hands-on workshops, symposiums, conferences, and field days.

**Compiled by Madeleine Charney, Informational Resources Manager, New England Small Farm Institute.**

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