

SMALL FARM QUARTERLY

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



Photo by

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SMALL FARM QUARTERLY - Summer 2004

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SMALL FARM QUARTERLY

Good Farming and Good Living that Connect 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.

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FROM THE EDITORS

By John M. Thurgood

In the last issue of the *Small Farm Quarterly*, Professor Thomas Lyson of Cornell University sounded the alarm that small dairy farms and rural economies in New York State are in real trouble. That is, unless something is done now to enhance the economic vitality of small upstate dairy farms.

Small dairy farms and, more importantly, families with a heritage of farming are extremely valuable to rural economies, to dairy consumers and to the heart and soul of the Northeast region. Agriculture is more than producing food, more than economics. It's people ... families ... that over the generations have devoted their lives to working with nature to produce the sustenance of life.

Now, these families are under economic fire. Some say that small farms need to grow larger to be competitive, that there is no future for small dairy farms. At the same time, research shows that economies of scale, while real, are not as great as we have thought. In fact, many small-scale farms show outstanding profitability.

From my twenty-two years of experience in working with dairy families, I know that it's often been difficult for them to make enough money to support the quality of life

they desire. There have been a few really good years, but overall, finances have been tight, and long days of chores have exhausted many farm families ... physically and emotionally. This is evidenced by the declining number of small dairies, and the lack of enthusiasm of many in the next generation to continue the farming legacy

The question is, how do those of us involved with agriculture, and residents in the Northeast region, react to this crisis? There is, of course, no easy answer. Collective action is essential if we are to turn the tide toward the vitality of small dairy farms.

First, we need to reject the premise that small-scale dairy farming is going to die, and embrace a vision of vibrant small dairy farms throughout the Northeast. Managers of small dairy farms have an intimate knowledge of every cow, field, and piece of machinery that is impossible for a large-scale farmer. Let's harness this knowledge, turning it into better farming systems and a better way of life for farm families.

Here in New York, Cornell Cooperative Extension professionals are increasingly attuned to developing programs to meet the specific needs of small farms. This focus needs to be ever intensified. We need to help all farmers meet their individual goals, rather than focusing on the technological innovators and "early adopters." Successful small farmers need to be able to share their stories with other farmers, and extension

professionals are in a good position to facilitate this process.

Cornell researchers are also beginning to focus on small farm issues. Historically, the premise of "scale-neutral" research has in many cases inadvertently favored large-scale farming. This thinking is now being replaced with a focus on research specifically addressing problems faced by small-scale farmers.

Yes, that necessarily means scale-biased research toward small farms. But there is something very noble in working to preserve a heritage of family farming, is there not? So, size bias should be viewed as positively serving a cherished sector of our society.

Finally, small dairy farm managers are taking pride in the fact that they are bucking the trend. There is also an energized group of young farmers ready to take the baton - farmers like Amy and Lee McDonald who are profiled in this issue of *Small Farm Quarterly*, Kevin and Barb Ziemba, Sarah Van Orden, Dan Miller, Marc and Nikki Johnson, and the "Tractor Boys" who were featured in previous issues.

Successful small dairy farmers continually adopt new ideas to make their farms more profitable. At the same time, most are working out of labor-intensive tie-stall barns, and their large farm oriented cropping systems have remained substantially unchanged for thirty years.

To thrive, small farmers need to explore new farming systems and methods, products and markets. They also need to continue to seek out new ideas from neighbors, publications, and Extension and agri-service meetings. And it is imperative that small farmers participate in setting the research and extension agenda to ensure that these efforts positively affect their businesses and lives.

The *Small Farm Quarterly* was created to help meet the needs of small farms, with an emphasis on dairy and livestock farming. Our articles relate to all aspects of farming and farm life, from new technology and management to family relations and youth activities. We appreciate our readers' input on the type of information you want to receive, your letters to the editor and perhaps most importantly, articles about keys to your success.

The current economic situation facing small-scale dairy farms is a crisis, so let's assume a crisis mentality. The battle can be won. The time is now and time is short. Start today. Be actively involved in insuring the continuing heritage of small-scale dairy farming.

John Thurgood is a Senior Whole Farm Planner for Cornell Cooperative Extension in Delaware County as part of the NYC Watershed Agricultural Program, a program of the Watershed Agricultural Council.

READERS WRITE

WHAT IS A SMALL FARM?

I enjoy the *Small Farm Quarterly*, but would like to know how you define small farm.

Thanks, Barbara Deming

Joanna Green writes: *The best we can do in answering that question is to offer the following excerpt from our first editorial of Summer 2003:*

Some folks say a small farm uses mostly family labor. The USDA says a small farm has less than \$250,000 in gross annual sales. Others say it depends on herd size, or acreage, or how big a tractor you drive. Still others say that small is a mind-set; doing more with less instead of expanding production. There are lots of definitions, and none of them are perfect.

So we say the heck with definitions. If the shoe fits, wear it! If you think of your farm as a smaller farm, and if you like what you read in Small Farm Quarterly, then well know were on target!

In any case, I'm delighted that you enjoy SFQ, and hope you'll stay in touch.

HOW CAN I GET MY COMMUNITY INVOLVED?

I own a tiny organic farm in Portage County, Ohio. Nearly every small farm in this county is selling out, giving up, or going bankrupt. Our extension office has little funding and is basically useless, even

though our agent does the best he can. I was a teacher for 21 years. I now do holistic healing, and the farm is one of my tools to teach people about planetary healing.

In February, I spoke to a small group, a vegetarian club, on the farm crisis. I told them I wanted to put the fear of God in them as to what will happen when all the small farms are gone, and they told me I succeeded. I focused on agribusiness, genetically engineered foods, toxic chemicals, the rise of diseases such as diabetes, obesity, cancer, related to the foods we eat, our loss of connection with the earth, and rampant, out-of-control housing developments.

You could have heard a pin drop on the carpeted floor as I spoke, but these were people who are already aware of the issues. I would like to give this speech 100 more times. But getting peoples' attention for anything in this area is like beating your head against a brick wall. People do not support the farms, or holistic healing, for that matter. I had a nice review done on my speech, and have sent copies out, with very little response. Do you have any ideas on what I can do?

Many of us, including myself, have reached desperation point financially, but giving up is not an option. I would appreciate any help, contacts, references, ideas.

Thanks, Laughing Crow

Joanna writes: *I applaud your efforts to get the rest of the community thinking about agriculture. Can you write a regular column on farm issues for your local paper? If so, be careful not to overwhelm readers with the negatives. It's so important to hold up some inspiring visions of what's possible — farms that ARE thriving, communities that ARE taking innovative steps to support their farmers, organizations that are creating positive change.... Getting people to take action depends on their having some sense of what's possible, not just what's wrong.*

One great place for inspiring stories is the new online version of New Farm magazine. Check it out at www.newfarm.org. Also check out the Sustainable Agriculture Network www.sare.org, and the Community Food Security Coalition at www.foodsecurity.org.

Another idea for you might be: "Is Your Town Farm-Friendly," a checklist produced by the New Hampshire Coalition for Sustaining Agriculture. It's online at <http://cecf1.unh.edu/sustainable/farmfrnd.cfm>. It's a checklist for planners, farmers, local elected officials and the public, covering topics like Practical Land Use Ordinances and Regulations, Fair Enforcement of Local Regulations, and Understanding and Encouraging Farming. Developed especially for New Hampshire towns, it can be adapted to almost any situation. Questions include: "Does your town have a detailed section on agriculture in the Town Master Plan? Does your town allow roadside stands or pick-your-own operations by right? Does your town have farmers serving on the local Economic Development Committee?"

You could work with local officials, other farmers and community members to go through the checklist and see if there are steps your town/county can take to support local farms.

Finally, I would strongly recommend that you get a copy of Growing Home: A Guide to Reconnecting Agriculture, Food and Communities, available from the Community, Food and Agriculture Program at Cornell www.cfap.org (607-255-9832). The book will guide you in thinking about how you can engage others in your community to start seriously addressing the future of farms — and people — in your area.

Best of luck! And don't let the bad news keep you down...

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SMALL FARM PROGRAM UPDATE

New Director Named to Cornell Small Farms Program

By Linda McCandless

Anu Rangarajan, associate professor of horticulture at Cornell University, has been named the new director of Cornell's Small Farms Program. She assumes those duties from R. David Smith, associate professor of animal science, who has served in that position for four years. Smith has been appointed interim director of the New York Farm Viability Institute (NYFVI). With the new director, the Cornell Small Farms Program moves from the department of animal science to the department of horticulture. Joanna Green will continue as extension associate with the program.

"Over the past few years, the college has expanded our work with small farms in New York," said Susan A. Henry, the Ronald P. Lynch dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs). "More than 90 percent of New York's 32,000 farms fall into the 'small farm' category. With this change in leadership, the Small Farms Program will continue to work with dairy and livestock operations, but we expect increasing involvement with horticultural operations like nurseries, greenhouses, and small fruit and vegetable farms."

The Small Farms Program (SFP) helps support small farms and small-farm organizations in New York through communica-

tion, research, education and extension. Activities include workshops in professional development, research and extension publications, a small farms web site, and a Cornell Cooperative Extension grant program for innovative small farm projects. In 2003, the SFP launched the Small Farm Quarterly, which reaches 26,000 farm and rural families across the Northeast.

"I look forward to this opportunity to work with small farms, particularly New York's livestock and dairy operations, and expand efforts with horticultural operations," said Rangarajan. "New York's small farms contribute more than 40 percent of the state's total agricultural production, and are a core component of the social and economic landscape of rural New York."

In her new role, Rangarajan will become the lead co-chair of the Small Farms Program Work Team (PWT). She will continue as lead co-chair of the Organic Production and Marketing PWT. Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE), CALs, the Cornell University Agricultural Experiment Station in Ithaca, and the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva formally recognize the work of 38 PWTs that focus on various community and agricultural issues in an approach that is interdisciplinary and intra-institutional.

NEW FARMERS

Young Farmers Find Their Way

By Mariane Kiraly

After searching for a farm in Pennsylvania, New York and Massachusetts, Amy and Lee McDonald found the right one two and a half years ago in Franklin, NY and started up business as Mc-Ala Holsteins.

Amy had always had an interest in agriculture, but as her parents were no longer dairy farming, she started by showing Holsteins in 4-H. Lee grew up near a dairy in Cayuga County and knew that he would like a farm of his own someday. The couple met at SUNY Morrisville as undergraduates.

Amy went on to work on the Willett Dairy for a year and then attended Cornell while Lee worked on the farm in Cayuga County. The couple married after Amy's graduation and moved to Pennsylvania where they managed a 400-cow dairy.

FINDING THE RIGHT FARM

In the meantime, they were building up a herd with the goal of finding a farm of their own. Their criteria included an excellent land resource, and that is what they found in the Ouleout Valley in Delaware County.

The McDonald's search for a farm took them to three states. They finally found the Franklin, NY farm through a college friend from New Berlin, Mike Gorrell, who put them in touch with Jim Archibald. Jim drove their milk truck and had retired from farming, but still owned an excellent farm with river-bottom land.

The 105-stall freestall barn with a 10-stall, flat-barn parlor was just what Amy and Lee were looking for. They moved 40 Holstein cows to Franklin and bought 40 more to nearly fill the facility. They rented for a year

and a half, and then purchased the house, barn, and a minimum amount of land. They hope to purchase the balance of the cropland after paying for the cows and improvements. Their milk is shipped to Garelick Farms.

At the time of their move, in late 2002, the milk price was heading for the basement and it stayed down for the next two years. Along with the financial struggle, the McDonald's needed to make necessary renovations to the barn including new stalls, fans, a dry cow barn, automatic take-offs, and more recently a calf greenhouse. They felt that these changes would add to profitability and cow comfort in the years to come.

Today, the McDonald's milk about 100 cows, plant about 120 acres of corn and harvest about 85 acres of hay, mainly on rented land. They do most of the work themselves with an occasional milking off. They belong to Dairy One, breed their own cows, and try to do some of their own vet work. They rely on a local vet for herd health expertise and emergencies.

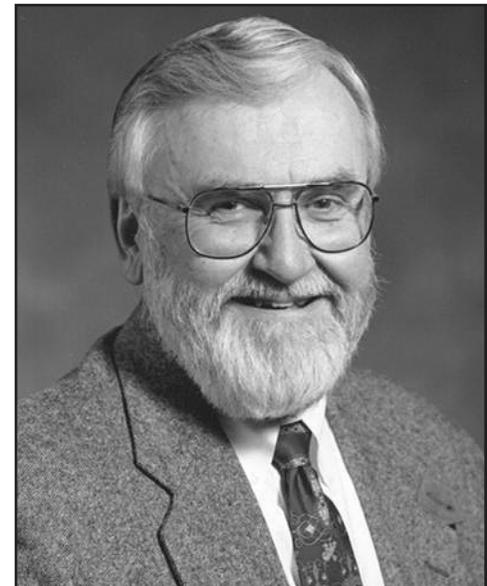
REAPING THE REWARDS

The rewards of dairy farming in Delaware County include living in an agricultural area with a strong infrastructure of products, services, and community support. Amy and Lee recall how, in the first week they moved in, each and every neighbor stopped by to welcome them to the area.

In addition to the pleasure of working for themselves, Amy and Lee are now enjoying family life on the farm. Their first child Tyler is just over a year old and they are expecting another child this fall. Amy and Lee enjoy being able to spend each day with him and watch him grow.



Anu Rangarajan is the new director of Cornell's Small Farms Program in April, replacing R. David Smith, who now oversees the New York Farm Viability Institute.

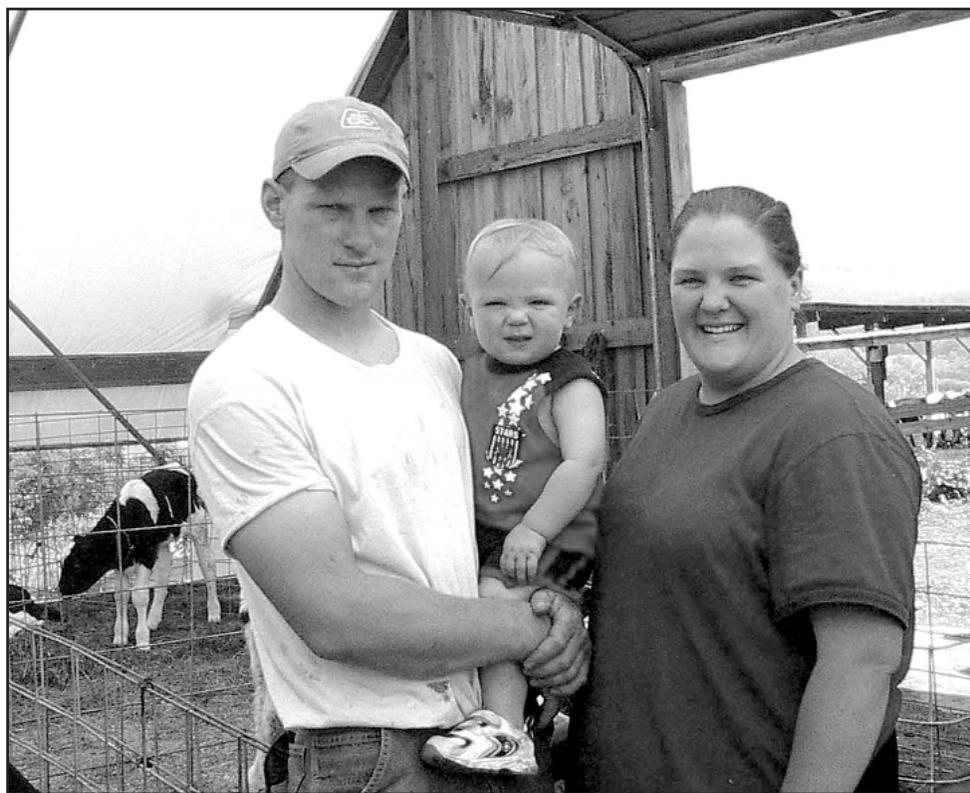


"I am sorry to be leaving the Small Farms Program," said Smith. "I have great confidence in Anu's leadership and that Cornell's small farm team will build in what we have accomplished. Serving as the interim director of the New York Farm Viability Institute is an exciting opportunity to get in on the ground floor of an innovative partnership among farmers and the organizations that serve them and to build an institute that will serve and add value for New York's farm businesses, both large and small."

Linda McCandless is Director of Communications for Cornell's College of Agriculture & Life Sciences.

Editor's note: On behalf of the Small Farms Editorial Team, the Cornell Small Farms Task Group, and colleagues throughout the Cooperative Extension System, I want to extend a warm welcome to Anu Rangarajan, and a sincere "Thank You" to Dave Smith for his outstanding leadership in small farm programming over the past four years. We wish him well on his new endeavor, the New York Farm Viability Institute, knowing there could not have been a better choice for interim director of this important new initiative. Thanks, Dave.

Joanna Green



Amy and Lee McDonald with son Tyler in their calf greenhouse

Photo by: Mariane Kiraly

The McDonald's live about midway between their parents, Amy's in Columbia County and Lee's in Cayuga County. Amy still shows cattle, now at the Delaware County Fair. They have been active in the Holstein Association and have fit in nicely in the local dairy community. There are many young farmers their age that they have come to know.

Their cows are healthy, productive, and very comfortable in their sand-bedded stalls. They are a good example of how people are able to break into the capital-intensive dairy industry and, with a good education and experience, be successful.

Mariane Kiraly is a Resource Educator with Cornell Cooperative Extension Delaware County. She lives in Franklin, NY on a 50-cow Registered Holstein dairy with her husband Andrew and children Ian and Alison. You can reach Mariane at 607-865-6531 or mk129@cornell.edu.



READERS WRITE**Remembering My Dad**

By Kim Brand

Bill Henning writes: When the editorial team first started SFQ, a question in our minds was how to gauge reader response. The most direct way is through the written feedback we receive. However, reader feedback can come in other ways.

My wife Kathleen first met Dick and Ann Brand of Seneca County last year. She was immediately touched with their exuberant warmth. In February Dick died suddenly and unexpectedly of a heart attack. He had retired from farming about eight years ago. Three days before his death Kathleen had met with Dick and Ann. In their conversation SFQ came up. Dick confided that he read every issue - cover to cover.

Our greatest legacy is the people we touch. I only met Dick Brand once, for less than 30 minutes, but I am a better person for it. To better understand why, please share in the eulogy for Dick provided by his son Kim.

Bill Henning**My Dad - Dick Brand (1928-2004)**

When you think of someone, you always think when you met last. Then you remember all the years that you spent with them. For me that has been almost 48 years.

Dad seemed so big and strong, not afraid of anything. He would even go to the out-house at night, in the middle of the winter - alone!

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I remember Mom and Dad fighting. We would run and tackle Dad, me on one leg, Greg and Dan on the other, and Susan would end up on his back. He would drag us around. Everybody laughed.

I remember Dad making me go to the mailbox after dark. I thought I was safe when I got to the mailbox and going back was going to be easy. Dad hid behind a tree. He hollered. When I got to the porch I was running as fast as I could. We laughed so hard.

We cleared hedge rows, burned brush, picked stones, dug ditches, milked cows, cleaned manure, mowed bales away - He never seemed tired. Some days we would all come in the house late, take a shower and Dad would say "Whew, we made it through another day." and that's just how you felt.

I remember our "new" Oliver 88 Diesel; then the 1650, 1655, 1850, 1855 and finally a 4-150. Each time he would say, "Now we have hit the big time."

Dad taught me the difference between a Walnut tree and an Elm. He showed me a "Jack in the Pulpit" and told me how a grapevine grew to the top of the highest Beech tree. We picked wild black berries and elder berries; drank from the spring and dug up trees to replant.

HOME AND FAMILY**Crossroads**

With Claire Hebbard

Successful small farm families are the foundation for successful small farm businesses. This column is dedicated to farm families working together, and provides a forum for your questions about the intersection of the farm family and the business.

Q: My neighbor is a wonderful woman, generous almost to a fault. However, she frequently calls me and complains about her situation. The finances for her dairy have been tight, and there are a lot of bills not being paid. She says that her husband won't talk to her about it, so therefore she just needs to vent with me. To be honest, I don't have the time to just let her complain about money problems. Besides, we have enough of our own worries, and her complaints don't help me to stay positive about my own situation, and I just don't want to answer her calls anymore. How can I stay positive about my neighbor?

A: It is a common thing for farmers to talk about the farm situation. It seems to me that men do it more at the corner coffee-shop or feed store, while women do more of it on the phone or over the kitchen table. Keep in mind that this is normal, and venting with friends is a good way to relieve stress.

But sometimes there are individuals who seem to be stuck in their problem and unable to help themselves. Unfortunately, this helplessness can extend to other friends and family. You seem to be saying

He told a story so you could feel it. You were there and he was reliving it. He hunted from the time he was 10 years old and told of pouring paraffin wax into shot shells so it would act like a slug. He told of his "big buck" and having the chance to make the Big Buck Club, probably his best story ever.

He went water skiing with his good clothes on. He took off from the dock and when they came back around he skied right up on shore. He made it look so easy.

Dad made everyone family. Everyone who came to the farm left with something. It might be vegetables, flowers, or just the serenity of a walk through the woods. This he lived for. It was home.

Then there was the joy of being a grandfather. He was especially gentle when he was with the little ones. The glow in his eyes when everyone was around and the laughter in his voice were evidence that he was proud of all his children.

Dad spent the greatest portion of his life less than a quarter of a mile from where he was born, even in retirement. He not only knew, but had a major impact on people all over the world. He taught me the things I know. He helped me become everything I am. That was my Dad, my friend.

that despite difficult financial times, you work to remain positive, which is great for your own health and farm business. Maybe you can use this skill to help her.

I encourage you to invite her over for coffee and have a heart-to-heart. Let her know that you care about her and her situation, and that you have similar experiences so understand some of what she's going through. Then let her know that you're feeling helpless in helping her, and that you are concerned for her and her husband, and their farm. Encourage her to bring in some outside help because you can't be the one to help her. Maybe help her to make the call (Cooperative extension, accountant or financial advisor, pastor, etc.).

Often people get stuck feeling helpless about their situation, especially if addressing it would risk upsetting another family member. But the energy that is released by venting continually would be better directed towards getting help to address the problems. Your honesty in telling her you can't help other than to support her in bringing in an advisor is a great gift you can give her. She probably doesn't feel good dumping on you, either, but having a friend express concern and offering specific direct support may be all that is needed to encourage her to take the steps needed to resolve her problem.

Claire Hebbard is a Farm Family Consultant with NY FarmNet. Send a question of your own to Crossroads, c/o Claire Hebbard, NY FarmNet, 415 Warren Hall, Ithaca, NY 14853, or email cer17@cornell.edu.

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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.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Why Isn't Agriculture Important to the Northeast?

By Ed Harwood

Ask the average person what a farm is. For some it is a welcome pastoral backdrop to their lives and residences. For others it is a smelly, noisy neighbor. If you ask a farmer, you often hear one of any number of time-worn myths. But these myths about agriculture are absurd, confusing to common sense... even offensive.

Many members of the agricultural industry misrepresent our needs and perpetuate myths that stymie our future success and drive off public support.

MYTHS ABOUT AGRICULTURE

For example, here in New York it's often stated that agriculture is the state's largest industry. It is clearly not, it is not even big! In most counties, the local health industry employs more and grosses more than the entire county's agricultural industry. The most encompassing estimates of agriculture's size place it at about 0.8% of the state's GNP. This particular myth creates complacency in the industry and gathers derision from those who know better. WE ARE SMALL and we need desperately to market why we are important to the citizens of our region.

HOME AND FAMILY

The Great Agricultural Fairs of New York

By Russell L. Marquart,

Where does milk come from? The supermarket, of course. Well not really, but this is the kind of response you'll get when you pose the question to some kids these days. Sadly, cows and other farm animals may be about as foreign to them as a Martian. One of the best opportunities to experience agriculture that they'll have all year is the Fair.

Let 2004 be the year that your family experiences the magic of the fair again. Here in New York, this year promises to be an exciting one for the many people who enjoy the 57 fairs that take place in our state annually. These fairs attract people from all walks of life including city dwellers, rural Americans, and international visitors.

For some city folks, it might be the first time they see a farm animal like a cow, sheep, or hog with their own two eyes. Others come for the thrill of a dazzling and dizzying carnival ride. The fairs offer something for everyone.

In New York we have three types of fairs. Youth fairs offer young people a chance to show their accomplishments to the local community. The county fair is the second step in the progression, providing positive competitive experiences for youth and adults. The grand culmination is participation at the New York State Fair. Each type of fair offers visitors a unique view of today's agriculture.

New York's agriculture is vast and thriving; indeed it is the "Pride of New York." It includes not only dairy and

The farm community has consistently fought legislation that would provide living wages and mandate reasonable work schedules. A minimum living wage is at least \$10/hr. Competitive farmers pay this and more. In return, they expect good workers - a fair bargain. A reasonable work schedule is 40 hours per week. In full recognition of the need to accommodate milking and harvest times, a good business will negotiate the work week with respect for a worker's needs and their desire to earn more with longer hours. Again, most competitive farmers do so.

The farm community has also sought H2A reform. I find it ironic that some farmers complain loudly about the loss of jobs (a small percentage of jobs actually go off shore) and the encroachment of imports while seeking H2A workers?!? Should not the conservative farm cry be for employing local Americans and creating the famous farm work ethic in our young people?

Disability insurance for small businesses is less than \$200/yr. Mandating it for what is one of the more dangerous occupations is just common sense and human decency.

The bumper sticker "No Farms No Food" is laughable, but widely accepted. The

crop farms but floriculture, aquaculture, agri-businesses, and product research and development, and much more.

So how does today's small farm fit into this mix of fairs? Just as small farms remain the foundation of production agriculture in our state, most fair participants represent small farms. For many farm families, competing at the fair is a long-standing tradition. The fair is a showcase for the family achievements and a chance to celebrate the season's hard work.

Such traditions are valuable learning experiences for young people. Participating in the fair teaches them to strive to be their best, showing them firsthand the significance of good sportsmanship. It also helps them create strong personal bonds with their peers.

While foods, games, and entertainment are important, agriculture continues to be the foundation for county and state fairs around the nation. It is still the primary focus of all that we fair organizers do.

So this fair season, be sure to take a day off to visit your

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Northeast was last self sufficient somewhere in the 18th century. We import a great deal now... even cut flowers, once a very successful industry, is now largely a foreign import.

I could sum up my 30+ years in agriculture with the observation that good fences kill farms, make angry or ignorant neighbors, and obscure the truth of what is going on beyond the fence. A strong industry does not require a fence - it needs no myths! A strong industry is proactive in addressing changes, competition, and new ideas. A strong agriculture works in concert with nature, respects its neighbors, and knows why it is important.

WHAT'S REALLY IMPORTANT...

Agriculture IS important to the rest of society. Its benefits are great, but not as seen through many farmers' eyes. Benefits from a vibrant agriculture must be viewed as the citizens of the Northeast view them: attractive landscapes; fresh, abundant, locally grown, safe, interesting food; local dollars; leadership, and employment; and contributions to the social and financial stability of rural communities.

All farmers have to stop stinking, polluting, complaining, and putting up ever-higher fences to the changes they must meet to succeed in the future. Farmers must stop making the industry look poor — needing low wages, imported workers, subsidies, and sympathy for low prices, bad weather, and bugs. Farmers must realize

local county fair. And if you can, plan a trip to the New York State Fair in Syracuse between August 26 and September 6, and see NY agriculture at its finest.

For a listing of county fairs in NYS, call the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets at 518-457-3136 or visit www.agmkt.state.ny.us. For information on fairs in New England, call your state agriculture department or visit www.newenglandexplorer.com/state-fairsne.htm. For Pennsylvania call the PA Association of County Fairs at 717-365-3922 or see www.pafairs.org.

See ya'll at the Fair!

Russell Marquart is a Certified Fair Executive with the Erie County Fair, the largest independent county fair in North America. Sponsored by the Erie County Agricultural Society, this year's event will be from August 12-22. For more information on the Erie County Fair, visit www.americas-fair.org.

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and advertise the import of their very small but valuable industry. Furthermore, they must charge accordingly and take charge accordingly.

Among agriculture's challenges are a cheap food policy supported by government regulation, subsidy, and farm politics, and agriculture's own unwillingness to take full responsibility for the part it plays in the world. These challenges can be met. The time is ripe: the government is deep in debt, we are obese, and rural economies are struggling.

The preferred future of New York State agriculture would have farmers:

- Depreciating (saving) for the upkeep and replacement of their assets to keep attractive landscapes
- Joining the rest of the small family business community
- Managing their markets
- Understanding the real reasons agriculture is one of the most important industries

Lastly, successful farmers would key in on quality food as any kid defines it: tastes good, looks like fun, Mom says it is safe and good for me, and I can get it when I want it.

Ed Harwood farms in Marathon, NY and is President of GreatVeggies, LLC.

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FARMING OPPORTUNITIES

Homeland Security Equals Free Range Chickens and a Good Dog

By Jim Hogue

ANSWER: Garbage.

A RIDDLE: Carl Hammer has 600 free-range, egg-laying hens. He lives in Montpelier VT where temperatures drop to -40 degrees F. His barn is unheated. His hens lay for 12 months out of the year. The fecal matter from the chickens does not pollute. Coyote, fox, fisher cat, skunk, raccoon and aerial predators make their livings in the same niche. This is not Carl's primary business. He turns a profit. How?

Living in the State Capitol, Carl has access to all the food waste his flock could ever want, especially when the legislature is in session. He charges a tipping fee to local restaurants, which supply him with appropriate food refuse. He feeds this to his chickens mixed with nutrient-rich and seed-rich late-cut hay. This mixture is 1) fodder, 2) heat source, 3) compost. (Vermont Compost is Carl's primary business.)

THE ECOLOGY: The chickens add to the food mixture a nitrogen-rich substance that chemists refer to as chicken sh-t. The food/hay buffet provides a bed for the efficient collection of nitrogen, and the ammonia gasses (that in a factory farm would resuscitate Tom Brokaw) are released so slowly that they are unnoticeable and non-toxic.

The product (not to mention the eggs) is a nitrogen-rich addition to Carl's compost, which sells for \$33 per yard, and is further refined into potting soil.

But mention eggs I must, because that is the story.

Wholesale, Carl gets \$2.40 a dozen for his eggs, which retail at \$2.95. That is what people will pay for extra-large, fresh, free-range eggs. The reason the eggs taste so good is the infinite variety in the food source.

Anyone observing free-range hens can watch them select from nature's table with individual and decisive discrimination. What I have noticed is that they prefer meals that are moving. Carl's hens are free to roam, or leave, in search of whatever they like. In winter, when confined by sub-zero F temperatures to the barn, they still get a good supply of live, varied and tasty food. And even in winter they are able to choose from the constant, ever-growing buffet.

The environment in the barn is a metabolizing ecology: a constant succession of species that live off of the decaying matter and off of each other. The environment of the farm is also particular. Carl's system takes advantage of the specific climate, geography, water sources and drainage of his land. It is, like all farms, situation specific.

There is also something to be said for the healthy and humane conditions that Carl affords his flock: 1) they choose their food (which they get to play with); 2) they are free to leave; 3) they live 'til they die; and 4) they are protected by a large German Shepard.

I know folks with tiny flocks who have lost everything to predators. And these flocks were not even free range. So . . . do not try this without a good dog. The skunk's aroma may linger, but that is a small price to pay.



A German Shepard provides crucial predator protection.

AUTHOR'S CONCLUSIONS

Carl Hammer is a success story. However, we must not allow his success to be used as an indicator that "the market will provide," or that the world is universally open to good ideas. "The threat of the good example" has broken many.

For every Carl Hammer there are countless others with equally good ideas who struggle to get by. Yes, of course, Carl is an example of a market success, but he is also at the right place at the right time. He is in an area that appreciates what he does, and that needs the services he provides. And he understands the ecology of his enterprise.

If there is a universal in the ongoing "Story of Carl Hammer," it is that knowledge and the ability to objectively observe, measure, analyze, and apply data are crucial. Each part of the puzzle is important.

Another lesson, which goes against what so many have been taught for so long, is that economy of scale does not mean racing to enormous size. The Amish have shown us this. But many in the business of agriculture and the governance of agriculture refuse to learn the lesson, with disastrous effects.

In an age of "peak oil" and potentially devastating climate changes, governments cannot let the serendipity of Carl's success be a substitute for careful planning and for supporting rural entrepreneurs who, by going back in time, are preparing for the future.

Jim Hogue is an entertainer, writer, radio journalist and avid gardener who has taken up the cause of small farms, sustainability, and state sovereignty. He lives in Calais, VT.



The flock goes to work on a mountain of composting food wastes.

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Carl's flock feeds entirely on restaurant refuse mixed with late-cut hay.

Photos by Carl Hammer

MARKETING

Consumers Favor Family Farms

For safe and nutritious food, Americans place more trust in small family farms than in large industrial farms, according to a national consumer opinion poll conducted by Roper Public Affairs, a leading global market research and consulting firm.

The Food and Farming 2004 study was conducted on behalf of Organic Valley Family of Farms, the largest and only independent national organic farmers' cooperative. One thousand adults, age 18 or older, were interviewed by telephone in a nationally representative sample. You can find the survey report at <http://www.organicvalley.coop>.

Americans overwhelmingly say that smaller scale family farms are more likely to care about food safety than large scale industrial farms, by a 71% to 15% margin. More than eight in ten consumers (85%) say they trust smaller scale family farms to produce safe, nutritious food. Almost twice as many consumers (45%) place a lot of trust in smaller scale family farms compared to large scale industrial farms (24%).

Nearly seven in ten Americans (69%) say smaller scale family farms are more likely than large scale industrial farms (22%) to use techniques that won't harm the environment. Two-thirds say they would pay more for foods produced without chemicals such as pesticides, antibiotics, and hormones. Over half say they would pay more for food produced with humane treatment of animals.

Overall, seven in ten Americans express at least moderate concern about the health risks of pesticides, hormones, antibiotics and other chemicals used in food production (70%), with just over one in four (28%) saying these chemicals pose a high risk to human health.

Perhaps most significant, the poll indicates over 8-in-10 say they are at least somewhat concerned with the decline in the number of American farms, and nearly half are very concerned.

CONSUMERS WILL PAY MORE

Two-thirds of Americans say they would

pay more for foods produced without chemicals such as pesticides, antibiotics and hormones. Women (71%) are more likely than men (62%) to say they'd pay more. About half of those surveyed (51%) say they would be willing to pay a premium for foods produced with humane treatment of animals. Four in ten (42%) would not.

Decline of U.S. Farms is Troubling According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the number of U.S. farms has dropped from seven million in the 1930's to about two million today, and 330 farmers leave the land every week. The public is troubled by this pattern. Fully 82% say they are at least somewhat concerned with the decline in the number of American farms; nearly half (46%) are very concerned.

Important to Know if Food is Grown Locally Most consumers find it important to know whether food is grown or produced locally or regionally. Overall, 73% of them find this information important, with 38% saying it is very important. Americans living in the Northeast (83%) were more likely to say this was important than those in the South (71%), West (70%) or Midwest (70%).

LABELS WOULD HAVE AN IMPACT

Most Americans (73%) report that having food labels specify whether a product was produced with pesticides, hormones, antibiotics or genetically modified ingredients would have an impact on their product choice.

According to Frederick Kirschenmann, Director of the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, Iowa State University, "the Organic Valley-Roper Survey drives home recent surveys findings by The Leopold Center and others: the majority of customers prefer food produced without pesticides, growth hormones or antibiotics, and the vast majority prefer food produced locally by family farmers—a food source that they trust more. Ironically, our current industrial food system is driving these very farms out of business at an unprecedented rate. The challenge before us is to develop more marketing infrastructures that connect these farms to the consumers that want to buy the unique products they produce."

This article was adapted from information provided by the Organic Valley Family of Farms, [ww.organicvalley.coop](http://www.organicvalley.coop).

RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT

Tilling the Soil of Opportunity Agricultural Business\Planning Classes Offered Throughout Northeast

Are you considering taking your farm in a new direction, seriously planning to start a new farm, or looking for ways to refine and improve your farm profitability? Tilling the Soil of Opportunity is a business planning course developed specifically for farmers, particularly those who are venturing outside of large-scale commodity production. The course is an agricultural adaptation of the nationally recognized NxLevel(tm) business planning curriculum. Developed in 1999, Tilling the Soil of Opportunity is now offered in many Northeastern states, with more joining up every year.

The course meets weekly for ten to twelve weeks, and participants spend a fair amount of time between classes working on their plans. Topics include goal setting, market research, development of marketing strategies, legal issues, labor management, budgeting, financial statements, cash flow planning and management, and financing. By the end of the course, participants have developed a complete business plan — a valuable tool for farm management that also can be presented to a lender.

Many farmers, both established and start-up, have found the Tilling the Soil of Opportunity course to be a valuable winter project. To find out where the course is being offered this winter, get in touch with one of the contact people listed.

TILLING THE SOIL OF OPPORTUNITY COURSE CONTACTS**MAINE**

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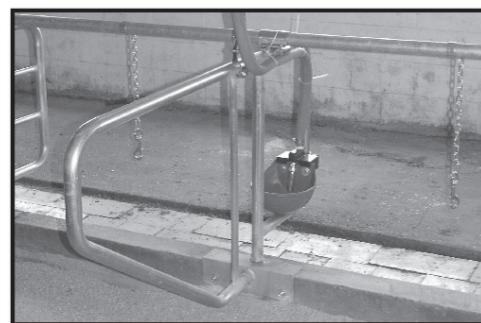
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PRODUCTION AND MANAGEMENT

Should You Have Crop Insurance?

This Small Farm Does

By Jim Ashton, NY FarmNet Family Consultant

Mary Heyer produces and sells food that she calls "natural, safe, attractive and affordable." She and her partner Frank, now retired from his work in the city, purchased the farm in 1987 because they wanted to return to the land. Their 160 acres sit on the flood plain of the Wallkill River just north of New Paltz, in Ulster County, NY. They grow vegetables, herbs, strawberries, raspberries, poultry, eggs and hay. Some of the farmland is rented and they also board horses.

The farm operation has evolved over the years. When the Heyer's began 17 years ago, they grew hay and stabled horses. They later introduced strawberries into their crop mix. As Mary's interest in natural foods increased, she began to grow vegetables for the fresh market along with organic eggs and poultry. A few years later she added a

greenhouse to grow bedding plants and out of season vegetables for the restaurant trade.

Forces of nature and changing consumer demands, both of which farmers have little control over, greatly impact farm income. The Heyer's have had to deal with hail, drought and frost, as well as insects, disease and changing consumer preferences. Reducing the many risks associated with farm production and marketing is a prime concern of their business planning.

For this article the Heyer's shared their thinking about risk management and planning, and the actions they have taken to achieve their goals of living on the land and making a positive contribution to their community.

FINDING THE RIGHT CROP INSURANCE

Five years ago Mary and Frank turned to the USDA Farm

Service Agency in their county to learn more about crop insurance. They were looking for basic protection against the impact of weather related crop losses.

The Heyer's decided that "NAP" — Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program - was the type of crop insurance most suitable for their needs. The NAP program reduces risk for commercial crops which are not usually covered by catastrophic crop insurance coverage (CAT). These crops include ornamentals, vegetables, berries and herbs, crops which form the basis of the Heyer's farming operation. Participating farmers pay an annual fee for each crop to be insured.

NAP insurance takes the sting out of losses greater than 50% of the usual yield. This "usual yield" is calculated based on the farm's Actual Production History or "APH". This means growers need to maintain good production records, including the crop, type, variety, location, production practices such as irrigation, planting dates and intended use of the commodity.

Recent years have been especially difficult for the Heyer's due to late frosts and excessive spring rains that made their river bottom soils impossible to work. They had crop losses in each of the last five years due to frost. Through the NAP program Mary was able to reduce the impact of such losses.

For more detailed information contact your local USDA Farm Service Agency office, or go to the FSA web site <http://disaster.fsa.usda.gov/nap.htm>.

Other risk management strategies
In addition to purchasing crop insurance the Heyer's have other strategies to reduce and manage risks on their farm.

MARKETING RISKS.

The Heyers use several different marketing channels to reduce their dependence on any single market. They sell at several farmers markets in the Hudson Valley, and also to restaurants. Because their farm operation is labor intensive and labor availability is not constant, Mary chooses not to sell directly to restaurants but to a crop "purveyor" who in turn sells to the restaurants. This system saves her the time, travel, and expense of direct marketing, and allows Mary to be on the farm managing labor and production.

A SMALL FARM HAS TO WORK SMART AS WELL AS HARD.

Mary attempts to stay ahead of the cusp of the public's interest in food by listening, listening, listening, to other growers, public agencies, food purveyor's and what the current popular TV chef is talking about. Mary is now growing "microgreens" in her 3000 foot greenhouse. Microgreens are the sprouts of various green vegetables, which are used as garnish in many New York City restaurants.

LABOR AND LEGAL RISKS. The farm, at critical times during the growing season, needs additional labor and hires migrant farm help. To ensure a legal workforce, Mary participates in the labor regulated H2A program. She believes the H2A program is necessary for the future of farming in the Hudson Valley, although she feels it should be adjusted to reduce the administrative burden for small farmers.

ENVIRONMENTAL RISKS. The Heyer's rely on sound agricultural practices which not only assure a marketable crop, but also protect the natural resource base of their farm and their community. They practice the fall and spring planting of soil cover crops which keep valuable top soil in place while recycling nutrients, reducing costs. They also use "trickle irrigation" to deliver precise amounts of water to plant roots, reducing the need for overhead sprinkler irrigation. However Mary notes that other neighboring fruit growers use overhead irrigation, as well as smudge pots and windmills, to reduce frost damage to developing fruit in the early season.

A further concern, which should be factored into any small farm's risk management plan, is the increase of global competition and the presence of foreign imports in the local food supply. Many countries that grow and ship crops in competition with our local growers don't have the same environmental or labor standards that we do, and can produce at a lower cost. Mary feels strongly that small farmers must make their voices heard at state and national levels. This seems to be the only way to level the playing field for small farmers.

Jim Ashton is a Family Consultant with NY FarmNet.

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HOME AND FAMILY

New York AgrAbility Assists Farmer with Safety Adaptations

By Holly Cestero

Jeffrey Jones is a strapping, 26 year-old, third generation dairy farmer in Ogdensburg, NY. After his graduation from high school, Jeff worked full time on the family farm. In fact, Jeff and his family planned to have him take over the farm upon his father's retirement. All that changed, however, one cool autumn night.

LIFE CHANGES...

Jeff and his girlfriend were coming back from a friend's house and were involved in an automobile accident, which fortunately left Jeff's girlfriend unharmed. Jeff, however, was not so fortunate. He was pinned inside the vehicle and sustained a traumatic brain injury (TBI). After a lengthy stay in intensive care and then in rehabilitation facilities, Jeff returned home under his parents' care. He continues to make progress at home, having received physical therapy, speech and occupational therapy services. Additional "therapy" comes from his continued activity on the farm.

After Jeff's accident and subsequent return home, his parents, Russ and Jeannette Jones, dedicated most of their time and energy to helping with Jeff's recovery. As a result, the family made the decision to sell the dairy herd and begin a new business that would allow them to devote much of their time to Jeff's needs.

FARM CHANGES....

After the sale of their cows and some extensive research, Russ and Jeanette purchased elk, bison, emus, wild boar, reindeer, peacocks, quarter horses, Belgian draft horses, and white tail deer. They opened Jonesey's Riverside Ranch, an agritourism business focusing in part on physically challenged individuals like Jeff. (You can read more about the ranch at www.joneseysriversideranch.com.)

In addition to the sale of elk meat, antlers and antler products, the Jones family also breeds and sells animals, runs an ice cream shop and Jonesey's Fast Food Mobile Concession Service, and offers horse drawn wagon tours, family boat tours, a petting zoo, and pony and horse rides. Russ is also working with Clarkson University to determine the feasibility of providing a therapeutic horseback riding program for people with disabilities at Jonesey's Riverside Ranch.

Despite his brain injury, which left him with a halting gait and poor balance, Jeff contin-

ues to play an active role in the farm. He currently operates the skid-steer loader to feed the elk and other animals and cuts the grass on the farmstead.

Jeff wants to be able to care for the animals on the farm without assistance. This requires that he be able to operate the necessary equipment and have sufficient independent mobility around the farm. Although the farmstead is fairly level, it still presents serious mobility issues for him. Getting on and off the farm equipment is also problematic.

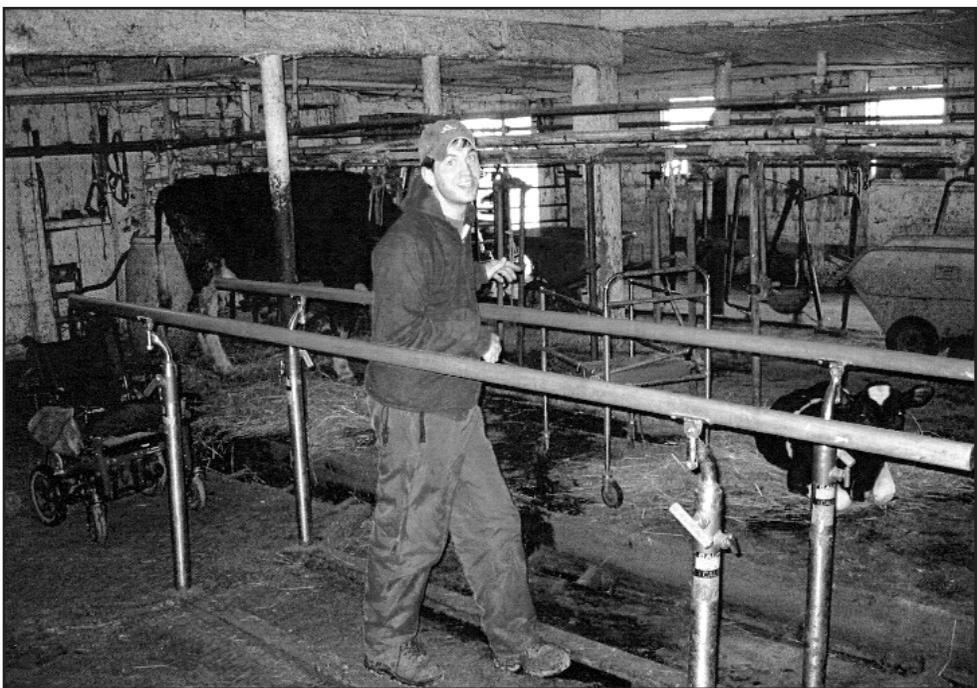
To determine and fund the equipment modifications he needs, Jeff has been working with Patrick O'Hara of the New York AgrAbility Project (a part of Cornell's Agricultural Health and Safety Program), and the Malone District Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID). After connecting Jeff with VESID, New York AgrAbility performed a worksite evaluation and determined which items would most helpful to him.



Hands-only operator controls and skidsteer designs are ideal for Jeff for feeding animals.

EQUIPMENT CHANGES....

A small 4x4 or 6x6 off-road utility vehicle would help him travel from farmhouse to barns and field locations. This kind of vehicle is versatile and has the ability to traverse muddy fields and uneven terrain. But, it needs controls that Jeff can operate within his limitations, and an operator station that is easy and safe for him to get in and out of. Jeff also needs a bench seat and a metal Roll-Over Protective Structure (ROPS) that not only protects him but allows him to hold onto the structure while he enters the seat.



Parallel Bars provided exercise and physical therapy when Jeff first returned home.

Photos by: AgrAbility

Jeff operates the skid-steer loader 3-4 times per day for varying lengths of time. New York AgrAbility confirmed that he is able to safely operate this piece of equipment as is but has a difficult time climbing in and out of the skid-steer. AgrAbility recommended adding "sure-grip" tape on the

Jeff is also primarily responsible for mowing the grass on the garden tractor. Since he leans to one side while driving, we recommended either a new mowing tractor with Roll-Over Protective Structure (ROPS) and seatbelt, or a retrofit of his old tractor. An operator seat with arm rests would also

help to stabilize him and keep him in an upright position.

Lastly, AgrAbility suggested a voice-activated headset as a safety precaution while Jeff travels about the farm. As it is possible that he could fall or get stuck at any remote location, this would provide a reliable form of communication to alert others to his location on the farm or field.

We're happy to report that the Malone VESID office agreed to fund these modifications recommended by AgrAbility. Jeff is already using the

modified skid-steer and lawn tractor, and is eagerly awaiting his new utility vehicle.

Holly Cestero is New York AgrAbility Project Manager. You can learn more about the services offered by AgrAbility by calling Holly at (877) 257-9777 (toll free) or email hjc26@cornell.edu. The New York AgrAbility Project is a part of the Cornell Agricultural Health and Safety Program, Eric Hallman, Director.

step surfaces of the bucket top, skid-steer front frame and any other stepping location. We also suggested constructing an access ramp in the barn for the skid-steer loader which eliminates the need to climb up and down when entering and exiting the cab. This is especially helpful during inclement weather.

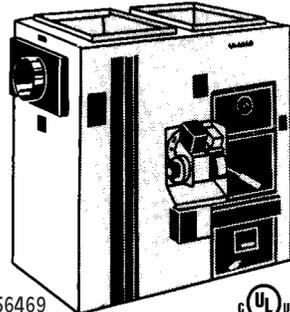
Since Jeff has trouble with cold feet in the winter, we also recommended winterizing the skid-steer loader by enclosing the cab with solid windows and adding a heater. A retrofit kit is available from the dealer for this purpose.

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FOREST AND WOODLOT

Managing Unconventional Resources: Hedging Your Bets with Hedgerows

By David R. Reid

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**NEW IDEA**

BUILT FOR THE BOTTOM LINE

Some 34 years ago the farm service agent and I stood in her office looking at the aerial photographs of my farm. We could see long wide shadows protruding into the lighter space of meadows. The shadows bulked wide as my thumb and grew darker at their centers.



Hedgerows are the interface between nature and agriculture.

Photo by Judson Reid

"Your farm," she said, "is remarkable for its hedgerows." I knew she wasn't recognizing an advantageous feature. We both knew that those wide bands of shadow designated unproductive land.

Back on the farm those bands of darkness loomed larger than shadows. Some of them spread 30 feet from side to side. Originally, they had separated fields into paddocks workable by hand labor, horses, and horse-drawn machinery. Now, left to nature's prolific processes over the years, they threatened to take over the meadows and return the farm to its wilderness origins.

One could see how they had developed. The land is stony. In preparing the fields for planting, the first settlers had used the stone to advantage. They marked out 3-5 acres in fields and then stacked the "free" stone to designate their boundaries. The newly formed strips of stone became property lines, or foundations for fences to pasture animals.

Stonewalls, maintained and kept in place, were then an asset. But left to the upheaval of freezing winters, they spilled away from their anchorage. This, coupled with less disciplined farming practices of succeeding generations, caused them to sprawl. Stone was not stacked but merely dragged or dumped near the walls.

Over time the outlying stones became traps for seeds of bushes and trees in the Fall. Come spring, the reforestation process began with the sprouting of seedlings protected by rock. Add 50 years, with more of the same careless stewardship, and these resulting mini-forests changed the character of the farm. It had become chaotically disorganized and unproductive.

Hedgerows had been a nuisance to some progressive farmers of my father's time. A friend of ours from Oswego County removed all of the hedgerows on the farm he bought from his father in the 1950s. He loved to "crow" about how he could plow, mow, or chop without turning for half a mile. But he also lamented the force of the wind-sweep beating his barn in winter, and he cautioned me about stripping my farm of the hedgerows: "It costs a lot of money to take them out."

Still, I had to develop a plan that would economically reclaim acres of unproductive land. Some of the hedgerows I removed. I paid the price for a bulldozer and backhoe

and extricated an island of trees and rocks from a 6-acre meadow. It was worth the price. Working around that island had required hours of time and it wasted gallons of fuel. Eliminating this obstacle gave me a 7.5-acre field, which worked efficiently, and in turn yielded more crop. The remaining hedgerows, however, were left in place, for economic and aesthetic reasons. For example, when I spoke of removing one hedgerow we viewed from our kitchen window, my wife said, "I wish you wouldn't do it. I don't want this place to look like Iowa."

Thus our "compromise" strategy over the years has been to manage the hedgerows. We have thinned out the hardwoods for firewood and logs, cut or "bush hogged" the weed trees, and pushed up the stones into more narrowly defined rows.

The process began with the pasturing of beef cattle. I ran a single electric wire around the perimeter of the meadows and let the beefers shoulder and rub their way through the vines, thorns, and interwoven thickets. This created paths that made these jungles more accessible. Then the wood cutting began. White ash and cherry had thrived in this environment and consequently produced a fire wood supply of 30 face cords a year, which continues to this day. Of course, the active cutting of wood and timber meant the thinning of choke cherry, prickly ash, grape vine, and box alder.

The first result was sunlight slicing through the dark, leave-laced labyrinth of rock and vegetation. With a tractor and hydraulic loader I pushed stone up onto the original walls. These actions reclaimed at least an acre of land in each meadow. Not only did I acquire more productive land, I also gained breeze and ventilation. It became easier to dry hay in each meadow as there was less overhang and the prevailing winds blew freely through the curing windrows.

Today the hedgerows on our farm are much thinner. We have better-ventilated, larger, and more productive meadows. We are thankful for the barriers between us and the encroaching spread of manufactured houses. We continue cutting firewood for the long winters, and use the natural divisions of meadows for rotational grazing. In the fall, deer glide along the sharp shadows and stand in our gun sights. The hedgerows provide hot fires and venison, nurturing our spirits from November to spring.

When my son was studying biology at Cornell University he made the observation that "Nature is programmed for chaos." From working with hedgerows I knew precisely what he meant. Working in, through, and around them has allowed me to practice chaos theory: creating order from a natural process gone wild.

David Reid farms 200 acres in Adams Center, Jefferson County, NY. In the past he operated a cow/calf beef operation, and produced milk on a rotational grazing system. He now grows crops and raises dairy replacement heifers.

STEWARDSHIP AND NATURE**A Small Farm
With A Big Idea**

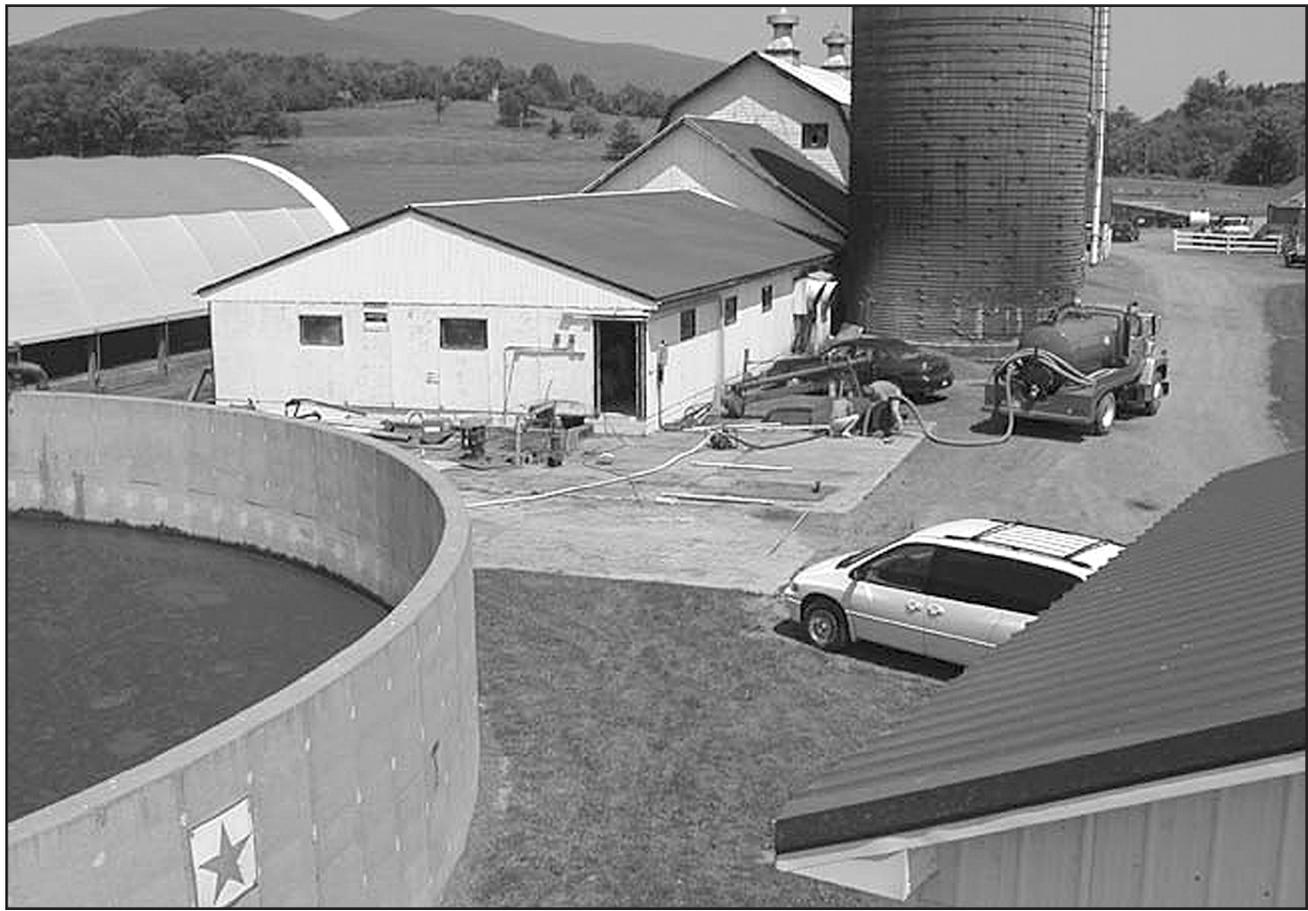
By Amanda Van Blarcom

John Verhoeven, the manager of J.J. Farber Farm in East Jewett, Greene County, has been farming his entire life. Thirty-six of those years have been spent managing the one-hundred cow dairy farm of J.J. Farber. Four pigs, ten chickens, and three horses accompany the cows to create the image of a typical New York State farm.

Four years ago though, Mr. Verhoeven began a new and extensive project for the farm's manure system, throwing this typical NYS farm into the limelight. With the help of the Watershed Agricultural Council (WAC), and the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), the J.J. Farber Farm came up with a big idea - they installed an anaerobic manure digester to ease the problem of odor and enhance the environment of the surrounding community. Additional financial support was provided by New York State Electric and Gas Corporation (NYSEG) and Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation (NMPC).

WHAT IS AN ANAEROBIC DIGESTER?

At the Farber Farm, the whole process begins with the manure from the barn entering a manure separator. The separator squeezes out the liquids, which cause most of the odor. The remaining solids fall into a dump wagon. The liquid then enters the digester where it is heated up to



A view from the top of the digester, LEFT: The liquid storage tank. CENTER: Pumps, and underground reception pit covered by concrete slab. RIGHT: Roof of boiler and separator building.

Photos by: Scott Inglis



Mr. John Verhoeven, the manager of J.J. Farber Farm



LEFT: Fixed-film digester, CENTER: Building housing boiler, separator and dump wagon, RIGHT: Liquid manure storage tank.

100°F in order to stimulate the growth of microorganisms which produce biogas, a mixture mostly of methane and carbon dioxide. The methane is burned in a boiler in order to heat the water used to heat the manure within the digester.

The conditions in the digester kill and reduce fecal coliform bacteria by 92%. Fecal coliforms do not actually cause disease, but they are an easily measured "indicator" organism which reflect the degree to which potential pathogens in the manure would be killed. In the end, the solids are either sold to landscapers or spread on cropland. The liquids are applied to the fields with the offensive odor virtually eliminated.

Mr. Verhoeven's anaerobic digester is different from most others because of its faster, smaller design. It is technically called a "fixed-film" digester, referring to its design for an expanded fixed film of microorganisms to speed up digestion. Many tightly packed pipes were installed to increase the surface area for the microbes to grow on. More microbes mean a faster digestion time when the manure circulates along the fixed film.

"People have taken quite a liking to the idea of the digester," Verhoeven comments, as he explains that the one-hundred cow dairy sits in between two ski resorts attracting a lot of attention from travelers and vacationers.

"The odor reduction helps everyone involved," he continues. It is not uncommon for Mr. Verhoeven to get visitors to stop and chat in his yard while he is outside working. They

usually have a lot of questions about farming, and now, about the digester. Most people like to see the small farm setting, and the tie-stall barn that Verhoeven manages.

DESIGNING A SMALLER DIGESTER

Odor reduction was a major goal for the project, and was very successful. But the project was not an easy ride to success. Anaerobic digesters are a fairly new technology for small-farm manure management, and differ from farm to farm.

"The entire process has been a learning experience for everyone," Mr. Verhoeven says. Some of the initial problems were from factors that were uncontrollable. "The cold weather gave us some problems," says Verhoeven. The digester tends to be more sensitive overall because it was built to be faster and smaller."

The key aspect of this project was designing a smaller digester to cut down on costs. This is where the fixed film comes into play. By providing a surface for the microbes to grow on, fewer microbes are lost when manure exits the digester. Increasing the number of microbes reduces the time the manure has to be in the digester (called the "retention time"), which in turn reduces the size needed for the tank. Designing the digester to treat only the manure liquids remaining after the solids are separated out also helped reduce the size of the tank.

This design worked for almost two years, until the fixed film pipes became clogged from a build up of calcite (which is used in the barn), and were removed. Without the fixed film, it takes longer for the digester to process the manure,

and the retention time has increased to about seven days. Currently, the digester can only handle about half of the manure produced by the herd.

The original plan was to dry the separated solids, and use the material for bedding. This would considerably cut bedding costs, but the compost dryer system plugged up repeatedly. Recently, a neighboring chicken farmer has expressed an interest in using the solids for co-composting with poultry litter.

"The composted bedding was something critical that we wanted to work, but didn't," comments Scott Inglis, Research Support Specialist at Cornell University. The most frequent problem is foaming. Digesters typically have a four to six inch layer of foam on the top; however, this digester periodically has bouts of increasing amounts of foam.

Trouble shooting the system Stanley Weeks, a consultant for the project and the designer of the digester, thinks that the foam may occur due to the sensitivity of the digester. Also, the rate at which manure is fed into the digester is much faster than a typical digester. Most digesters have retention times of 20 some days, while this one is being pushed down between 5 to 10 days.

"The most common cause of foam in the digester is an abrupt feed change," states Weeks. Since foaming has become such a frequent occurrence, Weeks is investigating anti-foaming agents. Recently, Weeks bought and tested an anti-foaming agent to add to the digester, and the

(Cont. on next page)

RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT

Northeast Small Farm Expo Coming To Ulster County, NY September 18-19

Thousands are expected to attend this educational and fun family event

By Heather Strachan

Are you a small-farm owner looking to explore new options? Or have you always just wondered what it would be like to live on a farm?

The fourth annual Northeast Small Farm and Rural Living Exposition and Trade Show promises to be a great educational experience and networking opportunity for small farm owners and anyone else interested in living in the country. It will be held September 18 and 19, Saturday and Sunday, at the Ulster County Fairgrounds in New Paltz, New York.

Several thousand visitors are expected to attend this outdoor, family-oriented event. Most are likely to be farming novices and folks who are just interested in agriculture. But according to Les Hulcoop of Cornell Cooperative Extension Dutchess County and this year's Expo Coordinator, about 20% will be farmers looking to broaden the scope of activities on their farms.

Visitors can take their pick of 5 educational tracks with 50 different workshops, given by experienced practitioners. A sampling of workshops includes: Fruit and Vegetable Production; Getting Started in Farming; Crop Insurance; Fish Pond Management; Making the Most of Your Rural Property; All About Sheep and Goat Care; Hay Quality and Pasture Management. These and 40 other workshops will make the Expo a valuable educational experience for the entire family.

This year's Expo will include a farmers' market featuring fresh local products. Organizers are also working with the state's organic farming associations to increase the involvement of organic farmers and consumers in this year's event.

According to Hulcoop, as people move into rural and suburban areas throughout the Northeast, many have questions about rural living and even about starting up their own small farm enterprises.

"New land owners in the Hudson Valley call us at Cornell Cooperative Extension regularly, seeking information on the best use of their 10-15 acres," says Hulcoop. The Small Farm Expo provides the perfect opportunity to have these questions answered while enjoying a lively and educational atmosphere.

A TRI-STATE PARTNERSHIP

Small Farm

(Cont. from previous page)

results have been very promising. "We are very enthused," comments Weeks, "and now all we need to do is experiment to see how much of the agent is needed."

The WAC project was originally intended to last three years, and then was extended for another year, terminating at the end of June 2004. The research on the project has made some headway, and as Mr. Verhoeven states, "We would like to find some more solutions."

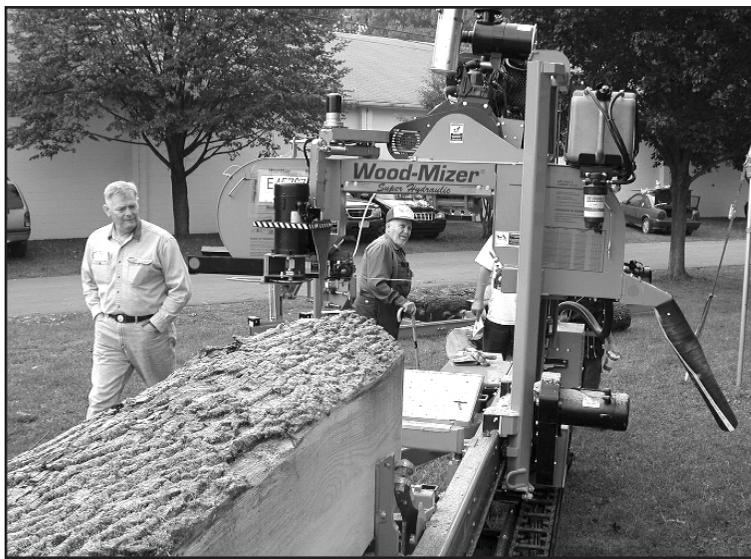
In order to find these solutions, the major players, NYSERDA and WAC, joined together to provide assistance and research on the digester project. "We help the farmer install the best management practices for water quality protection," says Karen Rauter, the Communication Director at WAC.

"Farber Farm is a good match for a researcher, since John has the required patience to stick with the project throughout

The Expo began as the brainchild of extension educators in Pennsylvania and New Jersey who increasingly found themselves fielding questions from people with small parcels of land who wanted to learn to manage it more effectively, for example with woodlots, livestock, and vegetable gardens.

In 2001, the first Small Farm Expo became a reality. Held at the West End Fairgrounds in Gilbert, Pennsylvania, the first Expo attracted close to 3,000 participants from nine states, and had eighty exhibitors and over 300 volunteers. In 2002, it was again held in central PA before moving to NJ in 2003.

Over time the Expo has become a joint effort of the



How trees are made into lumber.

Cornell, Penn State, and Rutgers Cooperative Extension Systems in cooperation with agribusiness, agricultural agencies, producer and commodity groups and others.

FIRST EXPO IN NEW YORK STATE

2004 promises to be an exciting year at the Expo, as it marks the first time the event will be held in New York State. According to Hulcoop, NY's Mid-Hudson Valley is ripe ground for such an agricultural event because of its long history of small-farms and its convenient location for many people throughout the mid-Northeast. "I believe there's a great opportunity for small farms to be successful within this 60 mile radius of metro New York City," says Hulcoop.

Over 25 organizations to date are lending support to this year's Expo. These organizations have staff helping in planning the event, given financial resources and have arranged for office support. All of these efforts will help make the 2004 Expo a success. Over ten county



The anaerobic digester at the Farber farm is a cylindrical tank covered with insulation. Biogas exits from the small pipe on the left, which connects to the hot water boiler.

the years it's taken to get everything right," comments Rauter. WAC was interested from the beginning to find out how a small farm like this one fits into the bigger picture, given its mission to enhance the economic viability of small farms while solving the environmental challenges.

WAC also provides the farm with a nutrient management plan, which guides the farmer

Cooperative Extension offices in three States, NYS Agriculture and Market Department, Cornell Small Farm Program, local Farm Bureaus and other farm organizations are hard at work supporting the Small Farm Expo.

Reflecting on the success of past Expos, Hulcoop notes, "Not only has the Small Farm Expo addressed a growing audience for the Cooperative Extension System, it has nurtured a strong relationship among Extension professionals in three states."



Out for a walk at the Expo.



Children's fun at the Expo.

For more information about the upcoming Small Farm Expo, visit www.smallfarmexpo.org or contact the Cornell Cooperative Extension Dutchess County office at (845) 677-8223 or lch7@cornell.edu.

Heather Strachan is a student writer with Cornell's Small Farms Program.

on where and when to spread manure to protect water quality. "Farms provide food, open space, rural jobs and scenic beauty to the community. Any way we can help farmers meet their goals, will help them in the long run," concludes Rauter.

NYSERDA projects are directed at assisting with energy-efficient solutions for environmental compliance, and for increasing profitability so that agricultural businesses, such as Farber Farm, can remain viable in New York. The project is a part of NYSERDA's Agricultural Waste Management Program, focusing on farms that are under pressure to control the potential pollutants from manure, including odor.

The bottom line: Odors greatly reduced. Four years ago Mr. Verhoeven was dealing with neighbors' and travelers' complaints of smelly manure. As a smaller farmer, he did not produce much manure, but was in the prime location for people to smell it. Now, with the digester in place, the odor has practically been eliminated. The new addition has even sparked an interest from peo-

ple within the community, another plus for agriculture's image.

"We were spreading manure for three days before my wife realized we were spreading it. Usually she smells it within the hour," John Verhoeven concludes. Even though researchers are still in the learning phase with anaerobic digesters for small farms, much has been learned and promising modifications are being implemented. J.J. Farber Farm is a perfect example of our small New York State farms that are striving to survive in a more environmentally friendly way.

Amanda Van Blarcom is a technical writer for the Cornell Manure Management Program. For more information about the digester at Farber Farm, contact Stan Weeks at (518)-583-1914 or SWeeks1997@aol.com. For more information about the Cornell Manure Management Program, contact Brian Aldrich at (607) 255-1819 or bbsa9@cornell.edu, or visit www.manuremanagement.cornell.edu.

NEW FARMERS

Learn to Manage Stress Early in Your Farming Career

By Cathleen Sheils

Being a beginning farmer is both a stimulating and stressful process. Stimulation comes from working with the soil or animals, growing and selling your product to customers who enjoy what you produce. Stress comes from being on a steep learning curve with your new venture. You're likely to be worrying about finances, equipment and building repairs, market conditions, working with close family members, and/or the weather.

Although there's probably never a stress-free time in farming, the start-up phase can be particularly challenging. You'll do better if you can learn to recognize when you are stressed, and take time to incorporate stress management techniques into your farming day. Here are some important tips for managing stress:

Recognize that we all experience stress. It's a natural response to life's events, not a weakness. Stress can help us to perform at peak efficiency, but when stress is too high, or is left unaddressed, it produces real and harmful physical and mental reactions.

RECOGNIZE THE SYMPTOMS OF STRESS.

■ Physical signs of stress include aching and/or tight muscles, raised blood pressure, headaches, fatigue, increased sickness and weight gain or weight loss.

■ Emotional signs of stress are difficulty concentrating and/or making decisions, irritability, impatience, self-criticism, forgetfulness, repetitive thoughts and a sense of being overwhelmed.

■ Behavioral signs of stress include verbal or physical aggression, changes in sleeping or eating habits, excessive use of alcohol or tobacco, being accident prone and avoiding other people.

■ Relational signs of stress are communication difficulties, conflict and dissatisfaction with relationships.

MANAGE STRESS BY SHIFTING FROM WORRYING TO PROBLEM SOLVING.

Be realistic about what you can control within your business and personal life, and then take responsibility for it by focusing on those areas:

■ Make daily, yearly, and long-term business plans to help guide your decisions. Learn to say "no" to things that hinder your planning goals.

■ Do not plan in isolation. Operating a farming enterprise today is complex. It's important to talk with others, ask lots of questions, and gather information and insight when you're planning and making decisions

■ Understand the importance of how you communicate, especially with family members. Learn to be clear about what you need from others, whether it's a task done on time or moral support. Practice really listening to what others are trying to say — take the time to understand what they're feeling.

■ Try to be flexible when unexpected events occur. And in farming they do occur! Choose the "relax response" rather than the "stress response" —take three deep breaths or count to 10.

DEVELOP STRESS RELIEF TECHNIQUES THAT WORK FOR YOU.

Below are examples of stress reducing techniques to incorporate into your day. Remember that you may need to use several techniques and give yourself some time to see results.

■ Take 15 minutes daily for yourself. Take a walk, ride a bike, read a book, listen to music or do something else you enjoy.

■ Take a deep breath. Shallow breathing brings in less oxygen and increases muscle tension, headaches and an uptight feeling. Breathe in slowly through your nose to a count of five, hold to a count of five and blow out slowly through pursed lips as if

you are blowing up a balloon. Try to inhale enough so that your belly rises and falls. Repeat throughout the day.

■ Walk away and take time to think about a situation. You'll come back to a problem better prepared to solve it. For example, if a tractor breaks down in the middle of harvest, don't kick the tires and scream. Take a 10-minute walk in the laneway to clear your mind and open it to solutions.

■ Take care of your body. Exercise, eat healthy, get adequate sleep, reduce caffeine consumption and avoid smoking, alcohol, and drugs.

■ Celebrate holidays and family events. Attend social functions. You may think spending time away from work is a poor use of time, but it actually helps you rebuild your mental and physical resources.

■ Manage your time. It is easy to feel overwhelmed by all there is to do. As a result, you may not accomplish as much. Make a list of what needs to be done, prioritize the list and do the most important things first. If there is something you find hard to face, tackle it early in the day when energy levels are higher to get it over with. Resist the temptation to tackle too much.

■ Work as a team. Identify tasks that you dislike, don't find time to do and are causing you stress. Seek help on these. If you put off bookkeeping because you have fieldwork to do, consider hiring or bartering for office help. Learn to delegate tasks.

■ Find someone with whom you feel comfortable and talk to the person about your feelings or problems. Don't keep them bot-

tlled up inside to cause serious health problems. Friends, family, clergy and other farmers can be good listeners.

■ Get help when needed. Sometimes a neutral third party or trained counselor can help you get through tough times. Working with a business or personal consultant can help you make sound business decisions and learn new communication skills and stress management techniques.

■ Contact your doctor. You should see a doctor at least annually and let the doctor know which stress symptoms you are experiencing. Some stress symptoms may also be a symptom of a medical condition that would respond to treatment.

■ Communicate your stress-management plans with your family, coworkers and employees. Do not feel guilty or allow others to make you feel guilty about taking time for yourself.

For more information on stress management and for assistance in developing your own stress-reduction plan, call New York FarmNet at 800-547-FARM (3276). FarmNet is a free and confidential information, referral and consultation program for NYS farmers and their families. FarmNet helps farmers reduce their stress by providing information, referrals and individualized financial and family consulting, and responds to over 2000 calls annually from NY's farm community. You can visit FarmNet at www.nyfarmnet.org.

Cathleen Sheils is Director of New York FarmNet.

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RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT

Women's Agricultural Network: 10 Years & Still Growing

By Mary Peabody and Beth Holtzman

Established in 1995 as part of University of Vermont Extension, the Women's Agricultural Network (WAgN) works to increase the number of women owning and operating profitable farms and related agricultural businesses. It was one of the first programs in the country to specifically focus on the educational needs of female farm owners and operators. While men are welcome at WAgN events the program specifically targets women for education and technical assistance. Since 1995, WAgN has worked with more than 1000 people - men and women—many of whom have gone on to start farms or diversify existing operations.

WAgN is oriented toward meeting the needs of women farmers at all stages of the business life span. From pre-business planning to preparing an exit strategy there are WAgN programs available to help farmers successfully transition through the many phases of business ownership. Since the program opened, over 200 women, many with no prior agricultural experience, have started agricultural businesses. In addition to realizing their business goals, these new farmers are also becoming a political force as many assume key leadership roles within agriculture and add their voices to the ongoing policy discussions related to the future of farming.

With support from a new three-year, federal grant, the Women's Agricultural Network (WAgN) is ramping up to improve existing parts of the network, launch new initiatives designed to expand the geographic reach of the program, and help establish a broader network of partners able to address the needs of women farmers.

In Fall 2004, WAgN will be offering its popular pre-business planning course, "Growing Places," at three locations within Vermont. WAgN is also planning a variety of practical, skill-building workshops. In addition, WAgN will move forward with efforts to make business planning information more accessible, and on a new on-line learning initiative. These on-line classes will allow individuals to participate in Growing Places and other learning opportunities whenever and wherever they are able to fit it in.

Even in a relatively small state like Vermont, travel can be a barrier to participation. WAgN staff hope that offering on-line courses will help make WAgN programs more accessible to Vermonters as well as to support women beyond the state's borders. On a weekly, sometimes daily basis, women from other parts of the country contact WAgN looking for resources and referrals. Eighty percent of WAgN participants are from Vermont, but the remaining 20 percent include people from 27 states and several Canadian provinces.

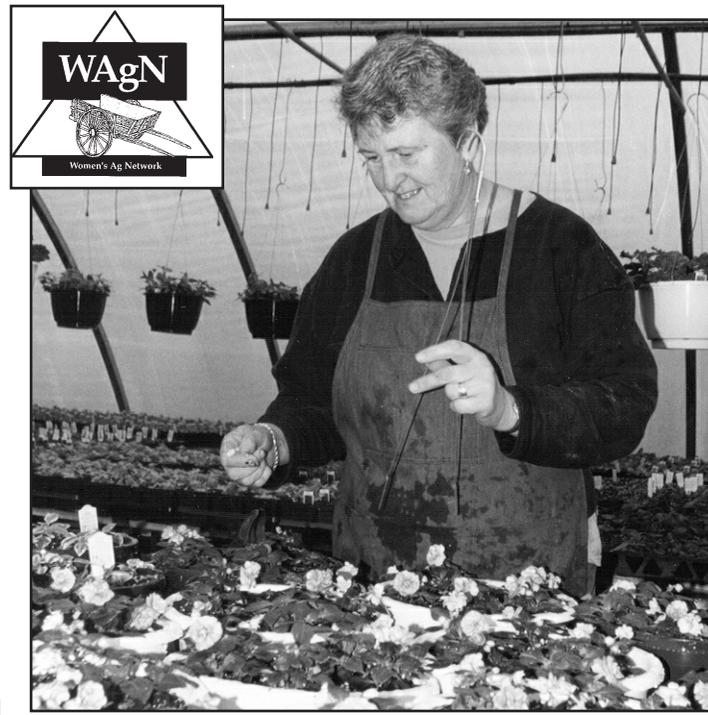
It's not surprising. For a variety of demographic and lifestyle choice reasons, there's a growing population both of women-owned farms and women who are aspiring to be farmers. And with them, clusters of agricultural educators and service providers are emerging who want to make sure these women have access to the education, technical assistance, financial assistance and peer support they need for success. Many of the earlier participants are now instructors in WAgN programs where they inspire others just getting started. From tractor safety workshops to monthly discussion groups, women value the opportunity to come together and learn in a supportive and friendly environment.

"Sister" projects have been established in New Hampshire, Maine and most recently Pennsylvania, where 100 participants spent

a day focusing on "Women in Agriculture" issues at the 13th Annual Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture Conference.

Representatives of those groups, plus others, are collaborating on plans for a national conference for women in agriculture, scheduled for late fall of 2005. If you have ideas or suggestions related to the conference or would like more information, please contact WAgN Outreach Coordinator Beth Holtzman at beth.holtzman@uvm.edu or 802-223-2389 x15. For details of WAgN's program offerings check out our web site at: www.uvm.edu/wagn.

Mary Peabody is the Director and Beth Holtzman is the Program Coordinator for the Women's Agricultural Network.



Diane Heffernan, owner and operator of Pine Tree Gardens, enrolled in WAgN's "Growing Places" course in 1997. Through Growing Places, she was able to establish priorities for her growing business and make some great contacts which have turned into lasting friendships. Diane continues to be an active participant in WAgN's discussion groups, is an officer in the Vermont Association of Professional Horticulturalists and now mentors her daughter who is preparing to take over the business.

Photo by Beverly Bishop



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RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT

Cornell's Community, Food, and Agriculture Program

The Community, Food, and Agriculture Program (CFAP) at Cornell University is a great resource for farmers, community leaders, and others who want to support local agriculture. CFAP is a unique, nationally recognized research, teaching and extension program dedicated to strengthening locally based food and agriculture systems and communities.

CFAP works with many different kinds of people, farms and communities to help them develop community-based strategies to improve the viability of farming and support a strong regionalized food system. These strategies include developing new markets for farm products; creating value-added processing opportunities; educating communities about agriculture; organizing "buy local" and regional identity campaigns; producer cooperation strategies; producer-consumer alliances; and much more.

CFAP's applied research program provides critical support for rebuilding the connections between farms, food and communities. Recent research projects have explored the non-economic impacts of agriculture on NY communities; the role of farmers markets in rural economic development; keys to success for small-scale growers' cooperatives; impacts of structural change in the dairy industry; and innovative marketing tools for farmers and agribusinesses. Far from being an ivory tower program, CFAP works directly with dozens of state, regional and national organizations, including NY Farms!, Northeast Venison Co-op, Finger Lakes Culinary Bounty, NYS Farm to School Coordinating Committee, Small-Scale Food Processors Association of NY, Cooperative Development Institute, NY Sustainable

Agriculture Working Group, Hunger Action Network of NYS, NYS Farmers' Market Association, NYS Farmers' Direct Marketing Association, Just Food, Regional Farm and Food Project, Politics of Food, Northeast Organic Farming Association of NY, National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture, Northeast Hop Alliance, Concord Grape Belt Working Group, and Heifer International.

HOW CAN CFAP SUPPORT YOU, YOUR LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM, AND YOUR COMMUNITY?

- Networking: a great place to find out who's doing what, where, with community-based food systems
- Inquiries: staff responded to about 900 calls and emails last year
- Workshops: CFAP staff host and are frequent presenters at conferences, workshops and meetings, sharing the latest on agriculture development.
- Subscribe to *Community, Food, and Agriculture Program News*, a quarterly newsletter distributed to over 1,800 recipients.
- Join the CFAP email listserv for agriculture development news, networking, events, and more.
- Visit the CFAP web site at www.CFAP.org and check out the NYS Ag Development Clearinghouse Website www.nyagdev.net, maintained by CFAP and originally funded by the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets.

For more information about the resources available at CFAP, call Gretchen Gilbert, CFAP Office Manager, at 607-255-9832, email gcg4@cornell.edu, or visit the CFAP web site at www.cfap.org.

PRODUCTION AND MANAGEMENT

Effective Natural Ventilation for New, Smaller Freestall Barns

By Curt A. Gooch, P.E.

What is the function of a dairy housing barn? The answer is simple: to provide sun protection in the summer, and wind and moisture protection in the winter. Modern, naturally ventilated dairy housing barns should be thought of as shelters. Shelters provide relief from the elements, but not total environmental control. They are constantly ventilated by the nature of their design.

This article is written for smaller dairy operators who thinking about constructing a new freestall barn. In theory, natural ventilation should be easy to achieve. But in practice, it can be difficult to achieve sufficient ventilation to provide a suitable environment.

BASICS OF VENTILATION

Whether using a mechanical or natural ventilation system, the goal is to provide fresh air uniformly throughout the dairy shelter so all animals receive adequate quantities of high quality air. Proper ventilation means moving outside air through designated air inlets and evenly distributing it throughout the shelter. Incoming air mixes with air contaminants (moisture, dust, pathogens, manure gases, and heat) in the shelter and is discharged, as shown in Figure 1. Fans hanging over stalls or alleys do not provide air exchange and are not a substitute for open sidewalls and endwalls.

To naturally ventilate a shelter, only a few things are needed: wind generated by Mother Nature, knowledge of a few simple engineering principles, and a little common sense. That's all there is to it! Design efforts are

focused on maximizing the cost-free energy provided by natural air movement (wind) to provide air exchange.

Let's look at the important principles that need to be considered when designing a natural ventilation system.

SHELTER LOCATION AND ORIENTATION

A successful natural ventilation system depends on the shelter's location and orientation. Animal housing shelters should be sited so that wind breezes are not blocked by natural or man-made structures. Ideal locations are on the highest ground available as a construction site on the farm.

Other structures, such as silos (both uprights and bunkers), other barns, and natural wind barriers should be located on the leeward (downwind) side of the shelter. If a new shelter must be located downwind from wind barriers, provide a minimum spacing of least 75' and preferably 100' or more to allow for proper air exchange.

The ideal orientation of the shelter, in terms of ventilation, is perpendicular to the prevailing summertime winds. With this orientation, air entering the shelter through the curtain sidewall travels the shortest distance possible to exit the shelter through the opposite sidewall. This improves the

rate of air exchange in the shelter and consequently enhances the cows' environment. Since winds change direction, winds striking the sidewall within 45 degrees of the perpendicular will still result in adequate air exchange in most cases.

In many locations in the Northeast the prevailing summertime wind direction is from the west or west-southwest. (This should be confirmed at your location as prevailing wind direction is truly site specific.) However, if your shelter is going to be oriented north-south to take advantage of these prevailing winds, you should avoid placing stalls along the west side of the shelter in order to keep cows out of the afternoon sun. Head to head stall layouts are preferred in this situation with center drive-through feeding shelters. Drive along feeding shelters can be designed with the feed alley, rather than stalls, on the west side of the shelter.

Other factors that affect shelter orientation include future expansion, topography, cow flow, and manure flow. Consideration should be made for all of these factors when siting and orientating a new shelter.

SIDEWALL OPENINGS

Sidewalls of naturally ventilated shelters are the air inlet or the air outlet depending on the wind direction (See Figure 2.). For proper ventilation to take place, the sidewalls of the shelter must be open; fully open in the summer, moderately open in the late fall and early spring, and yes, even somewhat open in the dead of winter.

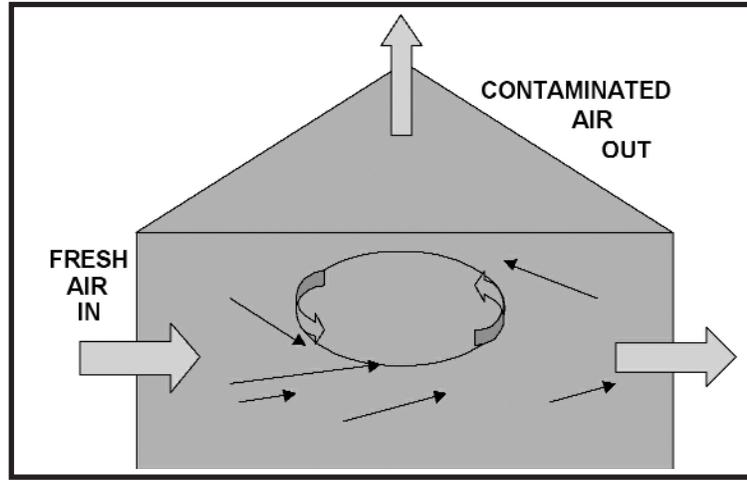


Figure 1. Basic principle of ventilation: fresh air mixes with shelter air contaminants and is discharged.

Sidewall heights should be a minimum of 12' for open front 2- and 3-row shelters with 14' preferred for 3-row shelters. With these sidewall heights, large volumes of air can enter and exit the shelter, even with slight breezes. Also, high sidewalls mean that, during periods of little or no natural air exchange, a large volume of dilution air is available in the shelter. This prolongs the period of time until the "stagnant air" in the shelter becomes "stale air".

Adjustable curtains are used on shelter sidewalls and endwalls to maximize ventilation openings. Sidewall curtains are usually split in half to form a top curtain and a bottom curtain. In most systems, top curtains drop down to open, and bottom curtains rise up to open.

Producers must be careful not to block the openings provided by high sidewalls with excessive curtain hardware or support materials. For example, using 1" by 2" welded wire mesh as curtain support is better than using expanded plastic safety netting, which has an increased surface area.

Curtain storage is also important. Curtains that roll to open and close are preferred over those that bundle as they take up much less space when opened, and also they do not provide as much habitat for rodents.

lized with trusses that have a king post (vertical member immediately below the ridge opening).

Secondly, a curtain can be installed that can be used to close the opening during adverse conditions. This is most adaptable with an overshoot ridge vent as shown in

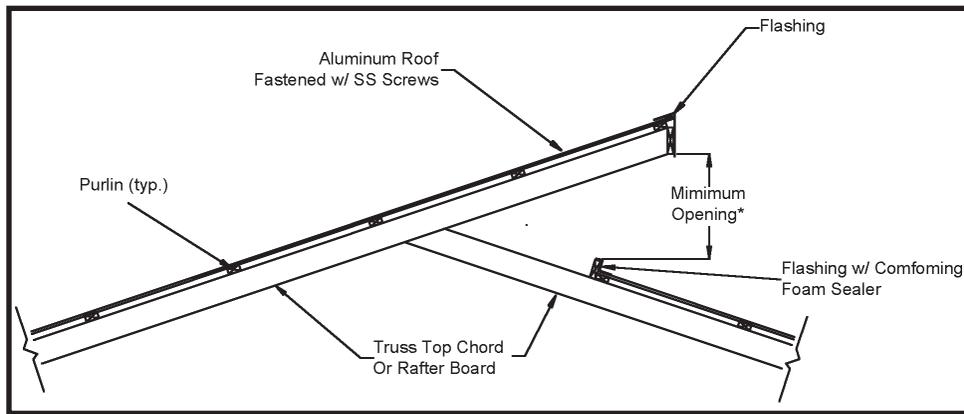


Figure 3. Overshoot ridge at a shelter's roof peak to enhance airflow and minimize moisture intrusion. The suggested minimum clear opening is 12" or 2" per 10' of building width, which ever is greater.

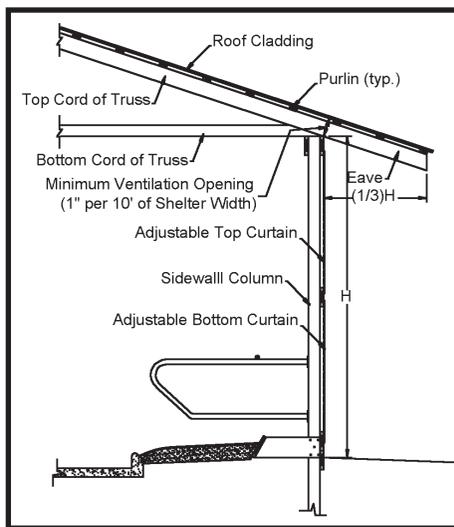


Figure 2. Curtain sidewall for a naturally ventilated shelter. Sidewall height, H, should be a minimum of 12' for 2- and 3-row open front shelters with 14' preferred for 3-row units.

EAVE OPENINGS

Eaves are designed to act as the primary air inlet during cold periods with strong blowing conditions and to provide protection from the sun and elements in warm weather. Eave air inlets are openings that cannot be closed down—they are always open. For 2- and 3- row shelters, the effective eave opening should be a minimum of 1" per every 10' of building width.

Usually, the distance between the top of the sidewall truss support header and the bottom of the roofing material is sufficient space to provide minimum ventilation. For cases where the soffit is totally enclosed, minimum ventilation can be obtained by making the effective height of the curtain correspondingly less than needed to totally close the sidewall.

RIDGE OPENINGS

Ridge openings are helpful in naturally ventilated freestall shelters as they allow warm, rising, contaminated air to escape through the peak. A ridge opening should be a minimum of two times the minimum opening of the eave — 2" of clear opening for every 10' of building width or 12", whichever is greater as shown in Figure 3.

Some producers are skeptical about providing such an opening, as they are concerned with precipitation entering the shelter and wetting the stall beds. Two methods are available to handle this problem for 2- and 3-row shelters. A gutter system can be installed below the over shot ridge. If this is desired, be sure to specify this to the building's designer before the trusses are designed. Gutter systems cannot be uti-

Figure 3. With either method, structural members exposed at the peak of the building should be flashed or otherwise protected from precipitation.

ROOF SLOPE

Roof slope affects the rate that hot contaminated air generated by the cows rises vertically in the shelter and discharges through the peak. All shelters with a gable design are best ventilated with a roof slope of 4/12. A pitch of 3/12 is suggested for monoslope roofs.

ENDWALL OPENINGS

Endwalls on freestall shelters should be opened as much as possible. This provides another means of allowing fresh air to enter the shelter and for stale air to exit. Opening the endwalls on days when the wind is blowing parallel to the ridge is especially effective with shelters that are short in length. Open endwalls can be achieved through various methods that can be used separately or in combination. These include: a curtain system in the gable; a curtain system in the endwall; roll-up doors; removable panels; and/or fabric mesh in lieu of metal siding.

VENTILATION MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

The following guidelines can be used to monitor air quality in naturally ventilated, cold shelters (those with minimal or no insulation).

- In the winter, the inside air temperature should not be more than 5 to 8°F above that of the outside.
- In the spring, summer, and fall, shelter air dry-bulb temperature should be equal to the outside dry-bulb temperature (if no evaporative cooling is employed in the shelter).
- If your shelter smells like your grandfather's old barn, then additional ventilation is needed!

In some cases the building site will preclude a new dairy shelter from being effectively naturally ventilated. Such a barn is a good candidate for mechanical ventilation. Information on mechanical ventilation and other dairy facility and waste management topics can be found by visiting the PRO-DAIRY facilities web site at www.pro dairyfacilities.cornell.edu or by contacting me, Curt Gooch, at 607-255-2088 or cag26@cornell.edu.

Curt Gooch is a Senior Extension Associate in Biological and Environmental Engineering at Cornell University, and works with the PRO-DAIRY Program.

FARMING OPPORTUNITIES**Yes, There IS Life After Dairy....****The Story of Healing Spirits Herb Farm**

By Anita Cassard

It was 1981 and operating a small dairy farm looked like a good idea to Andrea and Matthias Reisen. Milking forty-five Holsteins and Jerseys in the beautiful Finger Lakes Region of New York seemed like a little piece of Heaven here on Earth, and for the next eight years Andrea and Matthias tried hard to keep it that way.

But by 1989 both of them realized that the dairy was not making any money and the family was stressed, both mentally and physically. After talking about it and looking at alternatives, the family decided to have a dealer come in and buy the herd.

Prior to owning and operating the dairy, the Reises had been Peace Corps Volunteers in the Philippines. They had worked with subsistence and sustainable agriculture, and with the marketing of ethnic handicrafts, before returning to the United States.

All along the way they had been studying about herbs, body therapies and how to live a life of balance and harmony. Matthias' background in agronomy, his experience as an extension agent, and studies with numerous herbal experts such as Rosemary Gladstar helped the Reises to transition their dairy operation into a successful herb farm by 1991.

They first started by harvesting weeds that grew wild on their property: dandelions, burdock, motherwort, and alfalfa. Selling these herbs in small quantities allowed Andrea and Matthias to learn about the various markets for herbs. Gradually it became clear that there were three groups of customers: mail order; herb co-ops and stores; and herbal pharmaceuticals.

They converted their barn to accommodate drying, packaging and storing herbs, and



Andrea and Matthias Reisen with herbs.

extended it with a green house. Part of the barn was turned into a classroom area with a small stage and adjacent efficiency apartment. This space serves as the Education Center and provides room for workshops, lectures and classes. Andrea and Matthias teach classes on how to grow, harvest and dry medicinal herbs. They also teach massage and body therapies.

Today, Healing Spirits Herb Farm annually produces over a ton of dried herbs and a half a ton of fresh herbs, and ships throughout the USA. Five of the farm's



Andrea and Matthias Reisen at the farmgate.

Photos by Healing Spirits Herb Farm

twenty acres are dedicated to growing NOFA-NY certified organic medicinal herbs and as the business continues to grow, Andrea and Matthias are being recognized as premier growers of high quality herbs. Both farmers also serve as mentors, sharing what they have learned over the years through their many workshops.

Andrea and Matthias continually look for new avenues to expand their enterprise and are now selling value added products such as salves, teas, creams, tinctures and lip balms. They also take advantage of



With ingenuity, creativity, perseverance and an understanding that change is sometimes necessary in order to grow, they are achieving their small farm dreams and goals at Healing Spirits Herb Farm.

Anita Cassard is a financial consultant in Central New York with the NY FarmNet Program.



A patch of Healing Spirits herbs.

their beautiful natural setting by making the farm available as a retreat for special occasions. With its indoor and outdoor spaces for lodging; indoor bathrooms and showers; and outdoor wood fired hot tub, Healing Spirits Herb Farm has become an oasis for people searching to enhance their connection to self and nature.

Andrea and Matthias have lived and worked on their farm in Avoca, NY, for over twenty-five years. There have been changes. Yet their desire to live a balanced and harmonious lifestyle has not changed.

Small Farm Quarterly Youth Pages

AG QUIZ

How much do you know about agriculture? Take this Agriculture Quiz to find out!

Circle Yes or No for the questions below.

1. One acre of land is about the size of a football field. Y N
2. A section of garlic is referred to as a "clove". Y N
3. The part of the onion plant that we eat is the flower. Y N

For the following questions, circle the best choice that answers the question.

4. Which state produces the most food?
a. Utah b. Wisconsin c. California d. Texas
5. Which country produces the most food?
a. Mexico b. Iraq c. Russia d. United States e. Canada
6. On average, an American farmer produces enough food for about how many people?
a. 10 b. 25 c. 90 d. 130 e. 300
7. Out of every 100 people in the United States, how many are farmers?
a. 1-2 people b. 3-4 people c. 5-7 people d. 10 people
8. Agriculture supports many related industries like food processing, marketing and distribution, and farm equipment sales. With that in mind, how many people out of every 100 people in the United States work in jobs related to agriculture?
a. 5 people b. 10 people c. 20 people d. 30 people
9. Erosion of the soil is:
a. Soil which crumbles easily
b. Controlled by using lots of fertilizers
c. The wearing away or loss of the land
d. Controlled by allowing cattle to graze the land in unlimited numbers
e. All of the above
10. Which of these crops are produced in the United States?
a. Bananas b. Rice c. Herbs d. Soybeans e. All of the above

Answers:

- 1 - Yes 2 - Yes 3 - No 4 - c 5 - d 6 - d
7 - a 8 - c 9 - c 10 - e

This test was adapted from the NYS Ag in the Classroom website by Laura Gorsky, former 4-H member from Saratoga County and Cornell University sophomore in Animal Science. For more fun Agriculture Questions and games, visit the Kid's Zone at www.agclassroom.org/kids.

They Call Me The Eggman

By Dennis Deysenroth, South Kortright Calf 4-H Club, Bloomville, NY, Age 14

I live on a 45 cow dairy farm in Bloomville, NY where I raise chickens and sell eggs. I got started raising chickens in 1996 when my parents got me six White Leghorn hens. I kept them in a small range coop that my grandfather built back when he was in high school. I soon found I enjoyed working with chickens and went to get more of the same kind...and then others.

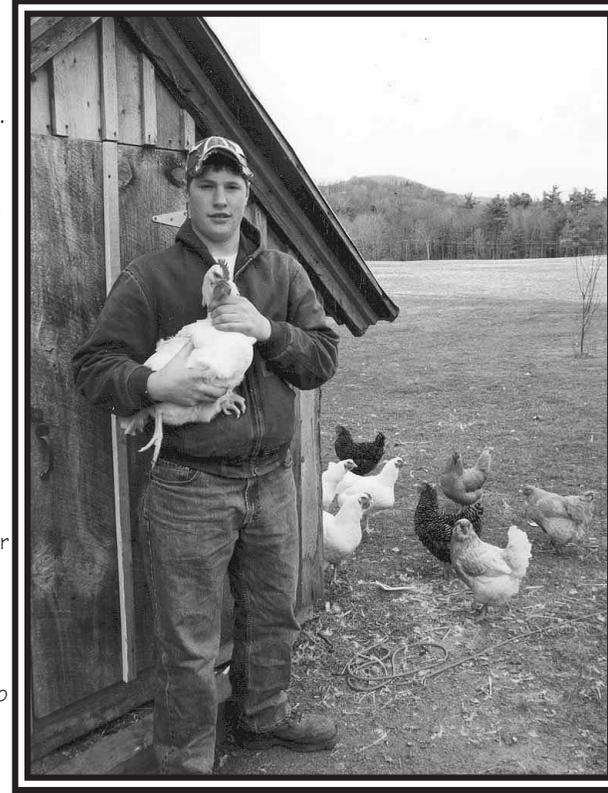
My friend gave me four baby chicks for my birthday that were Araucanas. When they started laying, I discovered that they lay blue and green eggs. One of them was a rooster I named Boomer. I still have him and he is seven years old. By that time, I had too many chickens for the size of my coop, so my grandfather and I built a larger chicken coop that holds about 50 chickens. When it got to be fall I needed to get the new coop full so the chickens would keep warm. I saw an ad in the paper for 18 Rhode Island Red hens. They turned out to be older chickens and didn't lay for very long, but they did keep my coop warm.

When spring came I decided to hatch some chicks in a small incubator. I successfully hatched eight baby chicks. After that it seemed like lots of people wanted to give me chickens and I had quite a variety of breeds. The trouble was I got too many roosters, which isn't good for egg production. I've found that if I put an ad in the newspaper advertising free roosters, there is always someone who will take them.

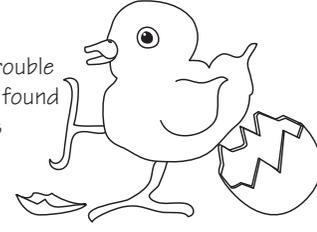
I have been showing chickens at the Delaware County Fair for several years. The best I have ever done showing chickens was Reserve Grand Champion of the 4-H show with a blue porcelain Bantam hen. I had a nice rooster to go with her, but unfortunately a wild animal got in the coop shortly before the fair and killed him. This has been a problem several times. The other problem my mom has with my chickens is that sometimes they get in her garden. They love lettuce and tomatoes. We are always arguing about whether the garden needs to be fenced or the chickens.

I have found the best way to get good chickens is through the Murray McMurray catalog. I can order baby chicks and pick them up at the Post Office when they are less than 48 hours old. I bought a brooder to keep them warm because the temperature needs to be 90 degrees for the first few weeks of life. Now I have 55 hens and Boomer.

This past winter my dad and I moved the coops up closer to the house so I could keep lights on my chickens and make their day longer. It has definitely made them lay more. I have been getting more than three dozen brown and green eggs a day. I sell them all around the neighborhood for \$1.25 a dozen. Everyone calls me "the Eggman."



Dennis Deysenroth moved his chicken coop closer to the house this year so he could keep lights on for them and encourage egg laying.



4-H Contests -

Having Fun & Learning Too!

By Katelyn Walley, Royal Rockets 4-H Club, Delaware County, NY, Age 12

I live on a small dairy farm with my parents and three brothers. When I was a little kid, I always helped my dad with his gardening. I enjoyed gardening very much and still do.

I was about seven years old when I entered a potato growing contest. We had to grow the most fingerling potatoes out of ten pounds of seed. Well, after hard work, lots and lots of help from my family, stinky fertilizer (cow manure) and Mother Nature, I accomplished my goal and won first place. We managed to grow 302 pounds of potatoes! We won a brand new roto-tiller, which at the time, was taller than me! I still use it for my gardening.

The next contest I entered was the pumpkin growing contest. This was a challenge. We ordered our seeds and planted them. They were growing great, with help from us of course. Then the frost came early. My dad, sadly, had to make fires to warm the pumpkins so they wouldn't get frostbitten. After all the hard work we put into them, I was proud to raise a 278 pound pumpkin. When the judging day finally came, it was held at my school auditorium. I couldn't even get it through the door! I was very proud to win first prize.



Katelyn Walley's 278 pound and winning pumpkin.



Katelyn Walley at home in her vegetable garden.

The 4-H office then gave us the challenge of growing giant sunflowers. The heads were very heavy and often drooped to the ground. We tried very hard to keep them growing. When the judging day came our sunflower measured about 42 feet tall! I felt like an ant when I received my award for first prize.

Now we are working on growing giant tomatoes and I am looking forward to another year of growing.

Hard Work Really Pays Off

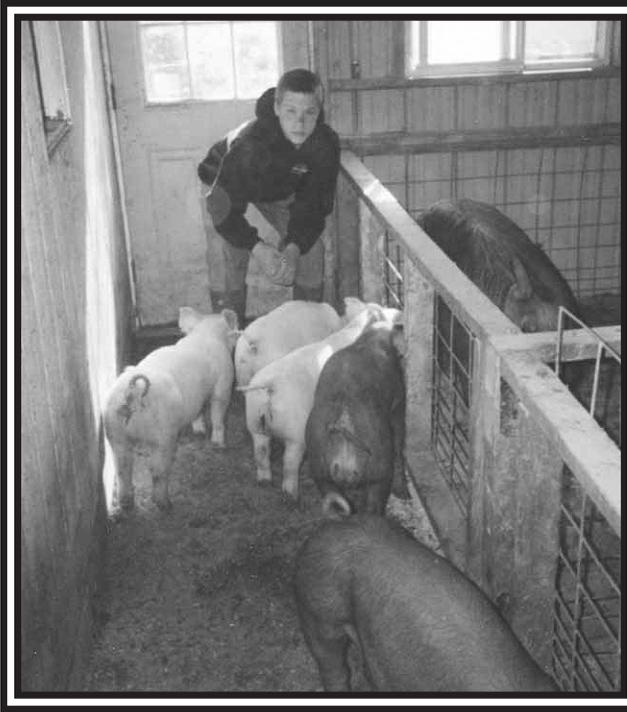
By James Gardner, Delaware County, Porkies Plus 4-H Club, Walton, NY, Age 15

We live on a small farm on 100 acres between Trout Creek and Walton, NY. I moved to the Walton area with my father and grandparents from Marlboro in 2000. We named our farm, "Trail's End Farm," because we are all the way at the end of a dirt road - literally the end of the trail!

My first experience working with cows and pigs was on my friend's farm. I started out helping feed and care for the animals and eventually joined Porkies Plus 4-H Club. My first show was in Cooperstown where I helped care for and show cows and pigs for my friend. I did pretty well in the shows and that gave me the incentive to get my own animals.

That first year, my grandparents bought four pigs for me. We built the pens together and picked up our pigs. It was a lot of fun and hard work. I learned a lot from my 4-H friends and leaders about caring for and showing my animals.

I used the money from the sale of my pigs to purchase a Simmental heifer and steer. We now have over 20 Simmental cattle and one Hereford steer. Our goal is to show animals that we have bred and raised with our Trail's End Farm name.



We have five calves and two more due in a few weeks. My first heifer, Betty, had twins - a bull calf and a heifer - black with white faces. Betty is like a pet and will stay on the farm for the rest of her life.

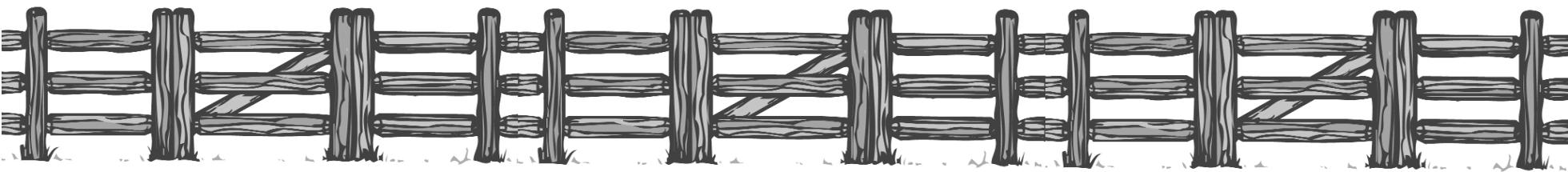
We are in the process of putting in more pastures for the cows and heifers. We keep our steers in the barn and lean-to and grain feed them.

Two years ago, we started to raise our own pigs. It is a really fun and exciting experience when you have a litter of pigs. We raise Yorkshire and Duroc pigs and now have ten sows. We also have a Duroc boar from one of our litters last year. He has really good blood lines and will give us nice show pigs. We are breeding quite a few of our sows to him. We also artificially inseminate (AI) some of our sows and gilts to some of the top boars in the country. We sell an average of 80 pigs for 4-H and feeder pigs.

You need to know a lot to care for the piglets to make sure they survive. The first few days are spent watching them, giving iron shots, navel treatments, ear notching and making sure they are nursing. Piglets are very sensitive to cold so we have heat in the barn along with heat pads and lamps.

I have met a lot of really cool people while showing my animals and have friends all over the Northeast. I love the show season because I get to see so many of those friends. I have won ribbons and trophies and was especially happy to win Master Showman for swine at the Delaware County fair last year.

There is a lot of work and responsibility when you have a farm, but it is a great way to grow up. Our small farm has come a long way in four years and I am very proud of it.



Small Farm Chores Lead to Big Life Lessons

By Emily Schmitt, Ouleout Crazy Kritters 4-H Club, Franklin, NY, Age 14

My parents, two sisters, and I live on a small farm in Delaware County. We plant, care for, and harvest sweet corn, pumpkins, potatoes, squash, and tomatoes, just to name a few. It is a family business and we all help out... my grandfather included.

We start our many plants in the house. In fact, sometimes we have had to rearrange the living room to fit in all of the plants and the plant stand my dad built. They get relocated to our two greenhouses when they are big enough. We take turns watering, and occasionally have to watch out for snakes.

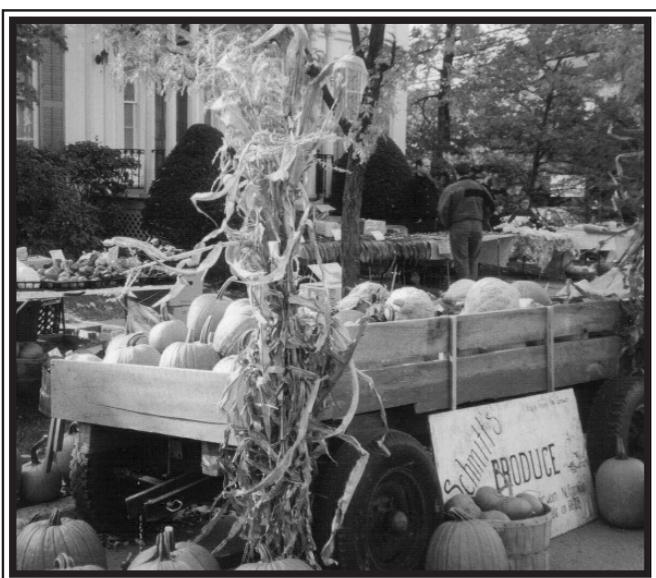
Harvesting is the most important part of it all. Everyone gets an assignment, from digging potatoes to picking a bushel of beans. We sell them on our roadside stand. In a good season, we take our products to local markets. Getting up real early and loading the truck is always a chore, but fun and I meet new and interesting people at each of the markets.

Along with vegetables, we produce hay. The hay helps support another project - my heifer project. In 1998, I received a bull and a heifer calf (twins). Since then, I have bought and sold registered Holstein and Jersey heifers. I show them at county fairs, and livestock shows in the area and do very well. Since we do not have milking ability on our farm, when they are old enough, we breed and sell them. My first heifer went to an up and coming Jersey farm in Wisconsin.

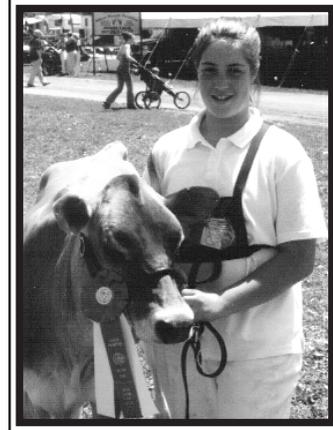
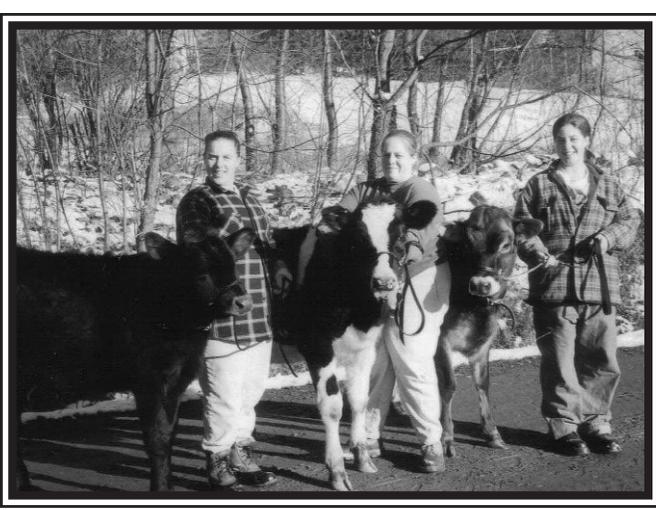
Being a part of a family that has a small farming business has helped me to learn a lot: responsibility, management, time control, and animal care, just to name a few qualities. These skills will come in handy in my future as I study to become a veterinarian.



Emily Schmitt and Cody.



Schmitt family produce.



Emily Schmitt showing at the Delaware County Fair.

The Youth Page is written by and for young people. Many thanks to the 4-H Teen Ambassadors in Delaware County, NY, for most of the material in this issue. We believe there's a bright future for young farmers in the Northeast. Whether you live on a farm or only wish you did, we'd love to hear from you! Write to:

SFQ Youth Pages
 c/o Celeste Carmichael
 4-H Youth Development Program Specialist
 CCE State 4-H Youth Development Office
 340 Roberts Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853
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FARMING OPPORTUNITIES

Gone to the Hogs

By Brent Buchanan

Can hogs be raised and marketed locally as a freezer trade? Of course they can, but is there a profit to be made? Can local farms supply something new under the sun that consumers are willing to go out of their way for? Some of these questions will hopefully be answered in the following example of an actual pig from Canton that I followed from farm to freezer.

Raising hogs is an old agricultural practice. Pigs are prolific. They can grow quite rapidly, and will eat many different feeds. Hogs can be viewed as a pre-composting facility of sorts, taking in compost-able kitchen, farm, or grocery store food waste and turning it into pork chops, bacon, and ham steaks.

But adding an extra enterprise to your farm operation should be considered carefully. You must be sure you have enough time, space, feed, and other resources so the new venture will not harm your existing enterprises. However, it is worth considering the economics of raising a few hogs as an additional family food source, or possibly as a product for sale or barter. Hogs can have an advantage over some other livestock species because of their relatively quick growth, which allows you to market several batches each year, depending on their start and finish weights of course.

In the example I followed, a local farmer in Canton raises corn, hay, beef, sheep and hogs on a limited basis. This farmer tends to keep good records so he is able to know what to expect for growth rates, feed conversion, feed price and end market price. His records showed that he had recently raised a group of 10 hogs from 120 pounds beginning weight to 259 pounds end weight at an efficiency of 3.8 pounds of grain per pound of body weight gain — a Feed:Gain ratio of 3.8. Such records are extremely important to keep your costs in line and to ensure a profitable enterprise in the long-run.

In previous years, purchase prices for pigs for this farmer had ranged from \$20 piglets

weighing 30 pounds, to \$35 piglets weighing 14 pounds, to \$37.50 piglets weighing 30 pounds, to \$40 pigs weighing 50 pounds, to \$60 pigs weighing 120 pounds! Whew, what a price range! Pricing seems to depend on how badly you want them and how badly the previous owner wants to get rid of them at the time of purchase.

The year that I followed his hog crop, he started with seven pigs. This group was purchased at 60 to 70 pounds body weight as feeder/finishing pigs. At a price of \$25 each, these pigs were an unusual bargain. In this case, the favorable purchase price was a matter of being in the right place at the right time. This batch of hogs was able to reach a good market weight — approximately 230 pounds — by April 10th. He calculated that their grain cost \$475 (5280 pounds grain @ \$.09 per pound).

Let's look at the return on just one of his animals. This 230 pound live-weight hog was sold for \$100 (that's about 43.5 cents per pound live weight.) This weight, of course, includes gut fill, hide, feet, and other inedible parts along with the edible portions. See Chart One for the details on this hog comparing live weight to all the components it was converted to.

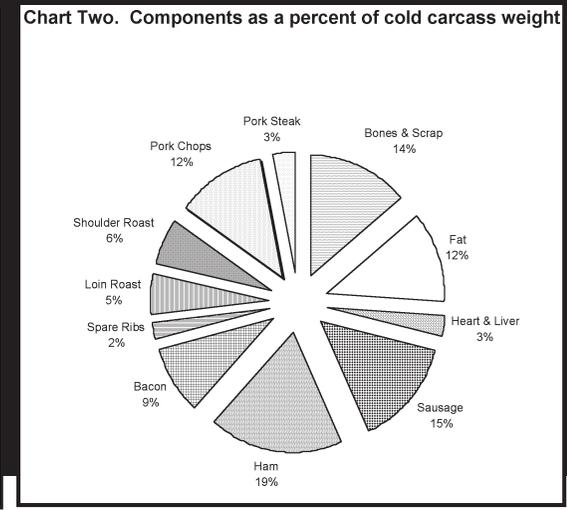
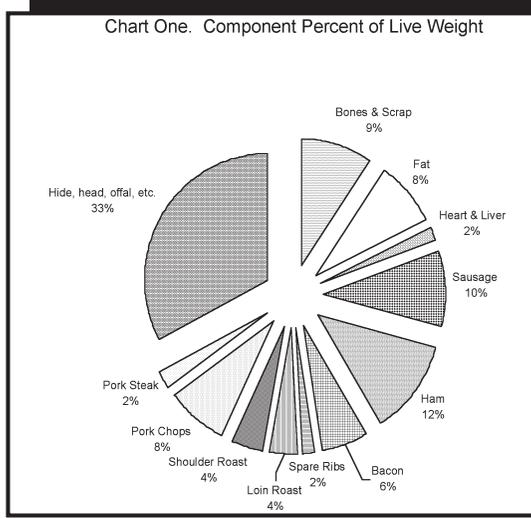
On slaughter day, this animal was dispatched at the home farm with a minimum of stress. After being bled out, the carcass was loaded onto a pickup truck and transported to a processing facility. Two USDA slaughter plants exist in St. Lawrence County and a number of non-USDA sites are available options as well. Prices will vary by services provided by the processor. For example, cutting, smoking, vacuum packaging, sausage-making, and freezing processes may all have their own fee schedules.

The farmer sold this animal by the head at the farm. Processing, in this case, was charged by a flat fee for transportation (\$5), slaughter (\$20) and then the remainder depended on the processes selected. Cutting and vacuum packaging was \$.38 per pound based on the chilled hanging weight, which is also known as the cold carcass weight or CCW.

The CCW includes the potentially edible portion of the animal — the part that gets hung up on a hook in the cooler awaiting the cut and wrap process. Some bones, fat, and scrap (grizzle, membranes, veins and all that good stuff that the dog prefers) are a portion of the CCW which will not end

ready for the freezer was about 114 LB. So, in this instance, the meat in the freezer was nearly 50% of the live weight of the hog. Once you calculate the costs to the buyer (\$100 for the pig and \$100 for the processing), the final price per pound was \$1.75 for chops, sausage, ham, bacon, roasts, etc. All meats were vacuum packaged into meal-sized portions that will stay fresh in the freezer for quite a while.

As consumers, it is true that we can catch sales in grocery stores and pay less than \$1.75 per pound. There is, however, a bonus value in supporting local agriculture (your neighbors). You are helping to keep your food dollars locally invested, you are



up in your freezer. This point often causes some confusion for would-be freezer meat buyers and can add to their unease at making such a purchase.

Chart 2 shows a breakdown of the CCW on this particular pig. Components will vary from hog to hog and butcher to butcher depending on genetics of hog, diet of hog, live weight of hog at slaughter, and the cut preferences of the consumer. This chart does give you an example of what you might expect for a ball park estimate, however.

As mentioned earlier, the live weight was 230 LB. The chilled hanging weight or CCW was 155 LB. Once processed and packaged, the total weight of the meat

promoting the productive use of local natural and human resources (land and labor), you are saving fossil fuel by buying food that was grown close to home, and you have the benefit of knowing where your food came from.

As producers, we need to determine if the cost of inputs, such as land, buildings, grain, and labor, is low enough to allow us to produce a product profitably. Hopefully the example in this article will help you figure out whether it makes sense to raise hogs for your own use or for sale.

Brent Buchanan is an Animal Science Specialist with Cornell Cooperative Extension of St. Lawrence County.

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT**Some Simple Observations on Small Scale Farming**

By Bill Henning

Are there opportunities in farming? CERTAINLY! They are probably more affordable than you have been led to believe. They are probably more family friendly than you would expect. They offer rewards that are non-monetary. Today's farms don't have to be big. However, they will challenge your skills as much, or more, than any other business.

This is a realm for those who are willing to face a good challenge. Today's farmer has many choices and is confronted with many factors influencing the decision. Choices are good. Making the right decision is the challenge. Keeping sight of the big picture helps.

COMMODITY ECONOMICS

Farming is usually the production of a commodity. One definition of a commodity is something for which the market price tends to migrate toward the average cost of production. Because a commodity has no unique characteristics, a purchaser will usually buy it at the lowest possible price. Obviously, anyone selling at below their cost of production won't remain in business for long. Anyone receiving higher prices will not hold a customer for long because the buyer will be able to find a lower price elsewhere. That the farmer is a price taker, not a price maker, assures a market for product, but usually at the lowest possible price.

This price-supply equilibrium is an inherent trait of the commodity business. In "letters to the editor" and on agricultural talk shows we often hear a lament about this phenomenon along with a plea for higher prices. But if the prices were higher more production would ensue and prices would come down.

On the other hand, we have the arguments that if we increase production our profits will also rise. The fixed cost would be spread over more units of production. That holds true for the short term, until over-production drives prices down and all the profitability gains are lost. The bottom line for

profitability in commodity production requires keeping your costs below the average cost of production for the entire market.

TECHNOLOGY'S CONTRIBUTION

Probably the first threshing machine was introduced by Andrew Meikle in 1784. It was followed shortly thereafter by Whitney's cotton gin and Newbolt's one-piece cast-iron plow. These introductions marked the first major contributions to farm mechanization.

Technological advancements progressed slowly and then became prolific following World War II. Today technology seems to be increasing at a compounding rate. Purveyors of this technology suggest it will contribute to greater profitability. But if this awe inspiring technology really did improve profitability, today's farmers would be wealthy beyond their wildest dreams.

The reality is that profit margins have trended downward as technology use has increased on the farm. Cornell's Dairy Farm Business Summaries from 1992 through 2001 reveal average return on assets of 0.6%. It appears that milk fits the definition of a commodity. For the most part this is representative of specialized farms striving to operate "as a business."

In order to maintain family living, farmers have been encouraged to specialize and to keep increasing in size. Where there were once many scattered small farms diluting potential pollution we now have concentrations of pollutants. This results in costs beyond those typically revealed in financial analysis. Those costs will be paid by someone. Right now, we don't really know what all those costs will be, who will pay them, when they will be paid, or how great will be the price tag.

If we really view farming strictly as a business, we need to consider "opportunity cost," the potential income from an alternate investment. Our investment dollars would soon leave agriculture for a more lucrative return.

WHY FARM?

Up to this point it might sound like making a living at farming is an exercise in futility. That need not be the case. Farming can still provide a rewarding experience and a satisfying living. It offers close family involvement, connection to nature, and to the community. It can provide increased stability to income and an atmosphere some find more conducive to peace of mind. Farming, as a way of life, cannot be lumped into the simplistic measurements of other businesses. However, succeeding might be easier if a somewhat less than "modern" approach were pursued.

Contrary to popular myth, the necessities for raising a family today can be derived from farming at any level of technology that has been applied over the last 100 years.

The overlooked — and hard to believe — fact that contributes to this range of technology possibilities is that the cost of living has never increased at all. "Ridiculous!" you say. Well, not really. The real cost of actually living has never increased, in terms of the calories of energy we need, or measures we must take to protect us from the elements, etc.

However, the cost of the manner in which we choose to live has increased a lot. By the standards generally accepted in today's society, cost of living has been the fastest increasing expense on the farm. You are free to choose whatever balance of lifestyle and cost of living you find most rewarding. Many successful small farms have elected a less materialistic lifestyle to be balanced by other values.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DIVERSIFICATION

In many situations, diversification decreases risk and helps smooth out the flow of income while specialization increases risk and opens the possibility of experiencing more volatile income. Enterprise diversification offers a buffer in that one product can be providing a positive return while another is losing money.

Adding value to a product, either through processing, packaging, or direct marketing,

offers another means of diversification. However, it should be noted that many good farmers do not aspire to deal with the public. Knowing your strengths and weaknesses, your likes and dislikes, helps.

Off-farm income is yet another form of diversification. Interestingly, part time farming was once very common. Historically, farmers often had a trade to complement farm income.

Diversification through the use of off-farm investments might also be considered. Some of these can offer rather lucrative returns with no labor and little or no management.

Regardless of the farm size, level of technology, or lifestyle one chooses to pursue, the one common denominator that best predicts a farmer's likelihood to survive and prosper is management ability. Good management requires the timely implementation of practices that contribute to production and income without incurring excessive expense.

Some people have natural management ability. However, management skills can also be learned when the student has a serious interest.

THE ESSENTIALS

More important than money, land, equipment, and animals; the essentials have dwelt in the minds and hearts of farmers who have persevered for centuries. They have been learned by young people who observed the problems their parents faced and saw how those problems were turned into opportunities. The primary essentials start with a combination of common sense, a willingness to work, and a passion for what the good earth has to offer. Never underestimate the power of that passion.

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

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COMMUNITY AND WORLD

Keeping the Small Farm Legacy Alive

From fond memories of a farming childhood to a vision of a “farm-based elder community”

By Alice Allen

My earliest childhood recollection is that of kissing a big old Holstein named Happy on my Godparents farm in Stow, Massachusetts sometime in the early 1950s. Otto and Aina Stein owned one of the many small farms that dotted the landscape in rural New England at that time. I can remember very clearly that defining moment when I decided... “When I grow up I am going to be a dairy farmer just like Otto!”

For the next ten years or so I was Otto’s shadow! While my Mother and Aina would have preferred me to be in the kitchen learning the domestic skills they knew I’d need, I was in my glory tagging along behind Otto. I couldn’t wait for the time I would be big enough to lug the Surge milking machine, hook-up the pulsator hose to the vacuum line, hang the machine on the surcingle and put it on the cows!

Otto had long ago taught me how to hand milk so I could at least strip out the cows after he took off the machine. It was pure heaven for me to feed hay to the cows or carefully take the grain that Otto weighed out for each cow and place it in their mangers. Both Mom and Dad soon learned there was no point in trying to dissuade me from my chosen vocation! Lucky for me that Otto and Aina were Mom and Dad’s best friends so the Stein Farm was really a second home for me!

As my grade school years progressed into junior high school and then high school I remained doggedly committed to the idea of becoming a dairy farmer. Every school paper I wrote, whether it was for English, Science or History was a story about the farm. In my second year of high school I began to realize that it was more than just the cows that I was in love with. The responsibility that I felt toward the Stein Farm was enormous.

While I did have to spend a good amount of my time on school work my family lived close enough to the farm that I believed I was a necessary part of the overall operation. I would always help keep the wood box full in the kitchen, keep track of newborn calves and who their dams and



Stein Farm, circa 1956.

sires were, help watch the cows for heats and keep my eye on close-due cows. Every day there was something going on. Tractor and equipment repair and maintenance, calvings, veterinary visits, seasonal jobs like spreading manure, haying, and logging in the winter were just a few of the jobs I always wanted to somehow be a part of.

Back then there was more of a sense of belonging to a community, not just a farm. Stow was a farming community like so many others. Stanley Stephenson ran his sawmill providing lumber for local building projects and bedding for the farm animals, Fanny Warren owned and operated a dairy farm and local milk bottling plant, and Charlie Carvill ran a poultry business, to name only a few.

In a broader sense the farming community was more like a very large family. Certainly there were disagreements among community members from time to time but when any kind of a crisis arose everyone pitched in to help out in whatever way they could. The problems and crises were shared as well as the joyous and happy events. This was the essence of rural, small town America up until the mid 1960s. The inevitable changes that were facing farmers would eventually take its toll on many of the small farms.

The Stein Farm survived some of the challenges of that time. Otto rebuilt the milkhouse to accommodate the arrival of a bulk tank. That renovation brought with it a “dumping station” that ended the lugging of full milk pails to the milkhouse! I thought then that the future looked pretty bright for me to carry-on at the farm. Several of the other small dairy farms in town had sold out rather than take on the added financial burden of purchasing a bulk tank. New housing developments, or subdivisions as they were referred to, had sprung up on two farms. I was confident that the Stein Farm would not succumb to the developer’s plans.

It came as a terrible blow when Otto told me he was selling the farm to Cahill the developer. There was absolutely nothing I could do. Otto and Aina were in their seventies. The main barn needed a lot of work. Much more help was needed than I could possibly provide—especially since I was planning to go to college. I was planning to apply to the University of New Hampshire to major in dairy science to come back to a farm that would no longer exist.

In the summer of 1966 the last of the animals from the Stein Farm were sold to a farmer in Maine. The farm itself went to the local developer with the subdivision work beginning almost immediately. Soon after the farm was sold the main barn was burned and the old farm house renovated into the modern style of the mid-sixties.

The farmers in a small town tend to give back far more than they take not only in the scenic beauty of the forests and open spaces they allow but the common sense business savvy we bring to town business.

Meanwhile, the Steins had moved to a small new home near where Aina had grown up. I still had two years left of high school and then four years of college so there was no point to argue that I could have kept the farm going. Otto and Aina were tired and needed a much-deserved rest! Instead I kept a few heifers at home along with my horse. At least that way I could keep my hand in farming.

Now lets jump ahead thirty-eight years. The farm of my dreams materialized as I always knew it would. Despite all the odds stacked against small farms, this place has managed to survive. But what now? What do we do when there are no young people interested in farming on a small scale?

The agricultural colleges are still chanting the bigger-is-better mantra. Those of us still farming in our mid fifties and older with no one to pick up the reins are facing some disturbing realities. There aren’t many of us who relish the idea of living in housing-for-the-elderly with no animals and only plastic geraniums on the window sills.

How about “farm-based elder communities”? For small farms and farmers to survive today we have to be innovative! What if we could create a community with a farm, probably dairy, at the center and modest homes for the members of this elder community on the less productive farm land? What if we could also provide a mentoring atmosphere for young children in the greater community with whom we elder residents could share our years of accumulated farm-related knowledge?

As the idea of the farm-based elder community (or elder farm home as it is sometimes referred to) has grown, there have been some surprises. The idea may be ahead of it’s time. But, the idea of helping young people to understand farm life and all the extraordinary benefits to a small rural community has begun to take hold—even if only in a very small way.

As a first step in the journey toward a possibly innovative method of protecting small farms we are developing a teaching/learning center on our small dairy farm. There is so much to learn from a small working farm that we can’t pass up the opportunity to help young people understand and appreciate the many benefits that small farms provide to a rural community.



Otto and Aina Stein and Laddle. Stein Farm, Stow, MA, September 1960. Photos by Rodney Smith

Farming is not all drudgery, hard work and long hours beginning at the crack of dawn. Those of us who have farmed for all our years (so far!) have learned that it is much, much more! There’s the satisfaction and responsibility of being your own boss. Working closely with the animals and the land is a humbling experience. The farmers in a small town tend to give back far more than they take not only in the scenic beauty of the forests and open spaces they allow but the common sense business savvy we bring to town business.

To that end we have received modest grant funding for the first ever “Wells River Conservation Summer Day Camp” on this dairy farm and the Wells River. What we hope to accomplish this first summer is to give young people a chance to experience animal husbandry and thoughtful stewardship of our natural resources at a very personal level. We also hope to give them an awareness of the historical significance of farming in the rural community. If we lose our small farms we lose much more than the farm and the farmer. We begin to lose our connection to the land—our dependence on the land for our very survival.

Do you think that — just maybe — this summer project can offer young people an opportunity to view farming as something they would like to do? Even if it isn’t something they want to do themselves it may at least give them an insight into the enormous importance of the farms that produce the food we eat.

Those of us who will be “teaching” the young people are optimistic that this summer program will be only the beginning of a much bigger local movement to help insure the survival of our small farms. If we can tie this teaching aspect into the development of the farm-based elder community then we will be providing for both ends of the spectrum, utilizing the skills of the elders to educate and encourage the younger generation to look more favorably on small rural communities and the farming way of life.

Alice Allen farms and thinks big in the town of Wells River, Vermont. For more information on the Wells River Conservation Summer Day Camp or to receive a copy of the concept paper for the “farm-based elder community” please call Alice at (802) 584-4077 or email kurganbc@kingcon.com.

FOREST AND WOODLOT**Sustainable Forestry at Indian Chimney Farm**

By Chris Grant

My wife Kim and I purchased Indian Chimney Farm as a place to grow our alpaca herd in the fall of 2002. The farm totals 65 acres, with 35 acres of pastures and fields, and a 25-acre woodlot. The other 5 acres contains two gorges and our home and gardens.

FOREST ECOSYSTEM

Over the past few years, I have been curious about the forest ecosystem. I began to learn about the forest, and have discovered that we humans are able to help the forest be strong, disease and insect resistant, and provide room for desired species to grow, much like a garden.

I found that much of our regional forest is too thickly settled with trees and shrubs to allow sun-loving trees to get started, and mature into the next generation. In addition, deer pressure and unsustainable logging practices are making it very challenging for native and valuable trees to regenerate properly. As a result of these and other factors, the forest composition is changing rapidly.

By the turn of the last century, most of upstate New York had been cultivated. Most of those old farms have since returned to a wild state, and the resulting forest is now evolving and changing rapidly. The succession of tilled farmland to forest in less than 100 years has created crowded wood conditions, and there is not enough sunlight for all trees to grow to their full, healthy, natural size.

SETTING FORESTRY GOALS

Our regional Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) forester helped us prepare a "forest stewardship plan," which basically describes the state of our forest, and our goals in managing it. Together, we decided that what was needed was a "cull" cut, or a weeding of the woods. With the help of this unbiased and knowledgeable DEC forester, we planned a walk through the woods to identify trees that could be cut for firewood or left to nourish the soil. This carefully planned cut would remove a very small percentage of the total number of trees and as a result would leave behind selected trees with improved chances of health, maturity, and succession. Our action would also open up the forest floor to increased sunlight, allowing sun-loving trees to have a better chance of growing to maturity.

So we began to develop some goals or guidelines to use in deciding which trees to cut and which to preserve. Here are some of the guidelines we came up with:

■ Many of the hardwood species have to get very old and large before they begin producing large amounts of seed, so many of the large hardwood trees were selected to preserve, ensuring they have the room they need to grow.

■ Many of our native, New York, tree species produce food (nuts and fruits) for wildlife and humans. Some examples of food producers are: oaks, hickories, wild grapes, cherries, and apples.

■ A few of our hardwood trees are very valuable on the timber market (like black cherry and red oak), so we wish to select for them so they can reach financial maturity, for eventual harvesting after succession is assured.

■ Some of the trees in our forest are rare,

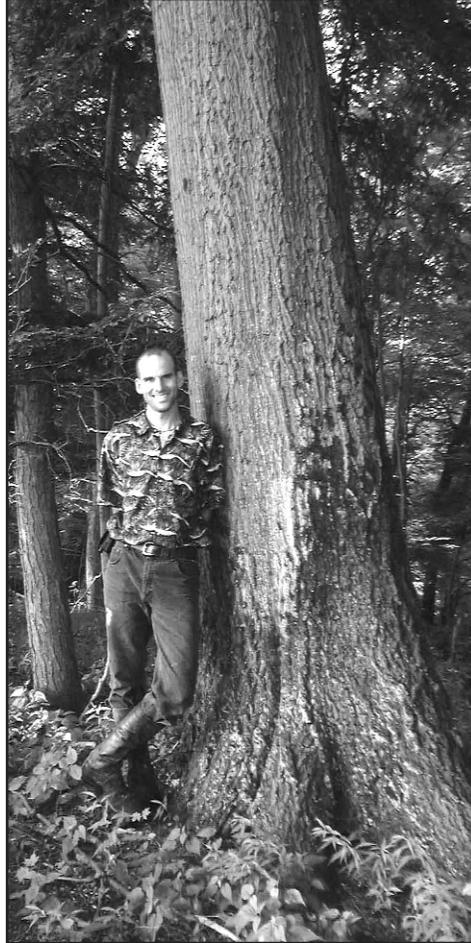
like black walnut, American elm, or are dying off rapidly, like white pine and red cedar. We wished to identify healthy specimens of these trees and select for them, so they have a chance to live out their lives and reproduce.

■ We keep 4-5 colonies of bees at Indian Chimney Farm, so we selected for basswood, which produces nectar that our bees turn into light and delicious honey.

One or more of these goals, in various regions of the woods, were used to help identify trees that we wished to preserve and maximize their growth opportunity.

WALKING THE WOODS

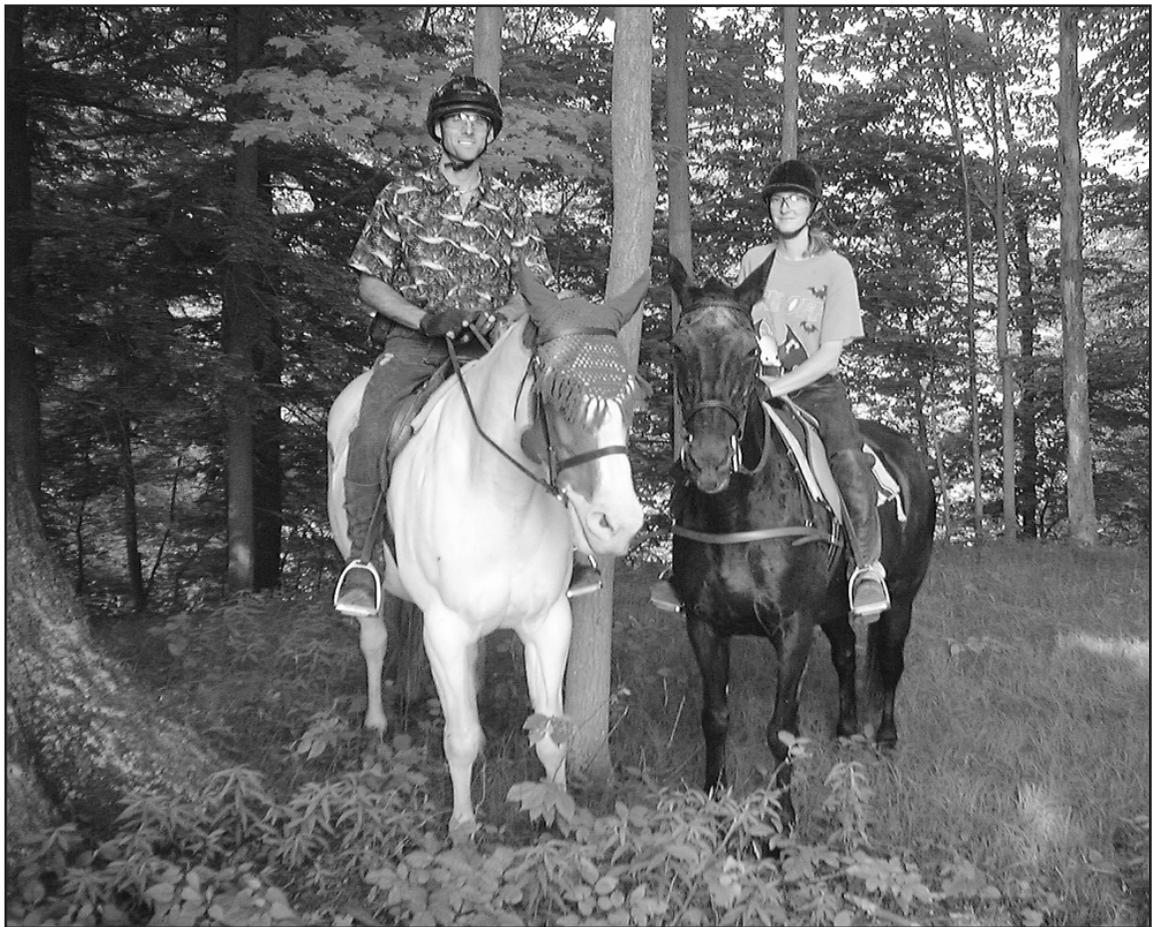
So we walked the woods, stopping frequently to look at groups of trees, determining the few chosen trees to preserve, and marking the few cull trees that need to be removed to free them up for maximum growth. In areas where black cherries, oaks and sugar maples were common, we dubbed the best "crop trees," and nailed an aluminum tag with a unique number into the base of each tree. We recorded



Chris and Kim Grant spent hours studying the trees in their 25 acre woodlot.

species, diameter, quality, and number of saw logs for later analysis and growth tracking.

We chose trees that were seed trees, eventual timber trees, wildlife habitat trees, and unusual or rare trees. We spent hours gazing up at the treetops, attempting to determine who was getting the sun, and where we could safely and effectively thin to improve the situation. Most of the trees we left alone, getting neither mark for cull or



Chris and Kim Grant on horseback, surveying their 25 acre woodlot.

tag for keep. We marveled at the diversity, the huge old trees we found (3 trees over 30"!), unusual growth patterns, massive vines, tangles of wild rose and honeysuckle, old stumps, and more (We counted the growth rings on one old oak stump and got to 100 before we hit the edge). We walked the woods in rain, snow and sun.

Our 25-acre woodlot took a total of 15 or 20 hours to cover it all. We tagged 327 crop trees, and many more trees got blue paint for the cull cut, mostly small, diseased, less desirable species, or very common trees, like buckthorn, beech, red maple, and hornbeam. The biggest trees will be left, throwing seed for their natural lives, and inspiring people with their size and beauty.

BEGIN TODAY

You too can be a steward of your woods. Any size woodlot can be studied, and possibly improved.

The first and most important thing you need to do is to identify some of your own goals for your forest management. Common goals include: recreation, timber sales, hunting, diversity, wildlife observation, habitat improvement, agroforestry (ginseng, mushrooms, goldenseal, berries, nuts), firewood, wetland restoration, maple syrup, and other reasons unique to you.

What do you want out of your woods? You can choose to leave it alone and the forest will do its own weeding in due time, and strong and sometimes invasive species will come to dominate. Or you can apply sound stewardship goals towards long term improvement of the forest stand.

Spend some time walking your woods, alone or with other friends, and let your woods tell you its needs. Think about what the forest will look like in the next generation, and beyond. Look at the treetops and see which ones have a healthy crown, which ones get the sun during the day?

NEXT STEPS

Once you are ready to take the next step, tap into free resources in the DEC and Master Forest Owner (MFO) volunteer program, to learn how to manage your woods

to meet your goals. Please, don't let the for-profit loggers guide your selection of trees to cut, as short-term profit goals are rarely in the best interest of your unique and precious forest ecosystem. Instead work with a good state or consulting forester to determine what, if anything, should be cut in your woods.

As the years go on, I'll occasionally add to or update the tree database, recording new sizes and growth rates. In 10 or 15 years, we'll cut some timber from the woods, once we know the next generation of trees is present. To help assure succession of the valuable timber trees, we also have a small nursery of trees that we bought from the USDA and put in buckets to grow. We've got 10 each of black cherry, sugar maple, red oak, sassafras, Norway spruce (for shelter in our pastures), and a few others. Once we've cleared some room in the woods, and these trees have grown up a bit, we'll put them in sunny spots and surround them with a deer fence.

FURTHER RESOURCES

Forestry is a big topic, and if you wish to become more active in forest management you may feel a bit overwhelmed at times. However, you have great resources to help you! Cornell offers a "Know Your Trees" web site at: <http://bhort.bh.cornell.edu/tree/trees.htm>. Both the NYS Department of Environment Conservation (DEC) and Cornell Cooperative Extension's Master Forest Owner (MFO) program offer free assistance to landowners wishing to take some steps in managing their forest. Locate your regional DEC office by calling 518-402-9405 or visit <http://www.dec.state.ny.us>. You can reach MFO at 607-255-2814 or <http://www.dnr.cornell.edu/ext/mfo>.

Chris and Kim Grant own Indian Chimney Farm in Lansing, NY. They raise and sell top quality alpaca and alpaca clothing, train performance horses, and more. The Grand Opening of Indian Chimney Farm and its country gift shop will take place on October 9 and 10, 2004. See: www.IndianChimneyFarm.com for more information.

Photos by Darren James

MARKETING

Concentration and Market Power in the Dairy Industry: Small Dairies Have New Allies In the Fight for a Level Playing Field

By Molly Ames

Dairy farmers in my county face some difficult challenges. But a few of us did come home from a meeting in Syracuse last April with some new thoughts about who our allies are, where our support might come from and some new hope for our future.

The meeting, titled "Concentration and Market Power in the Dairy Industry," was sponsored by the National Family Farm Coalition and delivered a wealth of factual, well-documented and well-presented information that confirmed a common experience of many farmers, regardless of their size, politics or marketing affiliation. That experience is one of increasing isolation and lack of representation in the food value chain.

The reality that faces dairy farm businesses here is the same, on-going challenge dairy farm businesses face everywhere. How do we make a decent living in the face of rising costs and increasingly volatile milk prices? Dairy farm producers and the agribusinesses that support them are hungry for information that helps them understand the economic pressures and market forces that influence the price of the product they sell.

TWO SMALL FARMERS AND AN EXTENSION EDUCATOR

It was in this spirit that local dairy farmer Ed Waldroff and I headed down to Syracuse to find out what New York State Attorney General Eliot Spitzer and other speakers might have to offer in the way of new information. The meeting appealed to us because we are concerned about a trend in the food system that has finally reached the dairy industry.

That trend is one of consolidation, merger and takeover into a very few mega-buyers and mega-processors. As a result of this trend, not enough of the returns on food products are going to the producer of the raw product.

The National Family Farm Coalition (NFFC), sponsor of the meeting, provides a voice for grassroots family farm and rural groups on farm, food, trade and rural economic issues. NFFC represents groups in 30 states whose members face the challenge of the deepening economic recession in rural communities caused primarily by low farm prices and the increasing corporate control of agriculture. (For more information about NFFC you can call 1-800-639-3276 or visit www.nffc.net.)

"I like the big picture perspective that the National Family Farm Coalition can offer," Ed said. "Many times in agriculture, we only concern ourselves with short-term, local situations. This can destroy whole sectors of production agriculture. NFFC appears to be broad-based." He noted that there were people at the meeting from California, Pennsylvania, Washington, D.C., as well as New York.

Ed milks 100 cows in a rotational grazing set-up on 400 acres, 375 of which are tillable. He sells his milk to Agri-Mark. His farm is located in Jefferson County, in the northern part of New York, which consistently ranks in the top three counties in

NYS for milk production. The dairy industry here is one of the mainstays of what is predominantly a rural economy. Dairy farmers here have experienced trends similar to most dairy regions and the trend continues; fewer farms, more milk, but still many more small farms than large ones.

Small cooperatives are under pressure Agri-Mark is a relatively small cooperative, with around 1800 members. Agri-Mark's members are scattered throughout the New England states but are primarily in Vermont, New Hampshire and New York. Agri-Mark's history as a cooperative dates back to 1916 with the formation of its predecessor, the New England Milk Producers Association.

Ed says his fellow Agri-Mark members see themselves in a fight against being denied access to the market, as has happened to other, small cooperatives. "We are a thorn in the side to the larger cooperatives," Ed commented to me regarding his fear of concentration and consolidation in the dairy industry. He points to the recent proposed Suiza/Dean merger, which had it gone through, would have shut Agri-Mark out of fluid sales into the Boston area market. The plan under the merger would have made DFA the sole milk supplier.

"It is a battle that Agri-Mark was willing to fight (and win) using Anti-Trust law, the Justice department and the courts." Forty % of Agri-Mark's milk was supplying the fluid market. "We could not afford to lose that."

Ed also points to the balancing issues that result from processor and cooperative consolidation. Fewer processors means it is a tougher challenge to balance milk in a surplus market. "Processors don't want to balance milk. They want to operate a plant six days per week. So a smaller cooperative is at a disadvantage unless they have options," observes Ed.

"When there is a surplus of milk, that's when farmer's go broke. Anyone can market milk in a tight supply." Managing processing plants can and does present cooperatives with additional business risk but can help with balancing issues that have contributed to the steep, sensitive and volatile price cycles seen in recent years. Agri-Mark is one of the few cooperatives that still owns plants and it recently acquired the assets of McCadam Cheese, including a plant located in Chateaugay. McCadam manufactures high quality cheeses.

Also attending the meeting was Richard W. Tulley Jr., a 100-cow dairy farmer from neighboring St. Lawrence County. He came "to better understand a way to fix rural America and move forward." Richard is a milk cooperative board member, NY Farm Bureau leader, and a father of eight children. His farm of 500 acres is located in another of New York's top-producing dairy counties. He belongs to a 50-member cooperative called Independent Bargaining Cooperative (IBC). IBC is currently marketing its milk through Allied Federated Cooperative, which has in excess of 1,000 members. Richard has hope for the future of this small cooperative because it listens to it's members. But he

sees significant challenges facing the industry.

"When farm gate prices are so low, no one can feel good about encouraging their children to go into farming unless there could be a glimmer of hope of a profitable life-style," Richard said. "The responsibility to provide this profitable life-style is in us, the leaders of the farming community, to negotiate a resolution and improve the farm-gate price. This is our primary goal."

The National Family Farm Coalition will hold its upcoming Summer Board Meeting in Albany, NY from Saturday, July 31st to Monday, August 2nd, with a press conference to support NY State's MPC legislation. The meeting will also include a Workshop Training Session and Dinner/Panel Discussion on Sunday evening that will be open to the public, providing a chance for NFFC member groups to network with other groups in the Northeast. Please call NFFC at 1-800-639-3276 for more information!

One of the stated goals of the meeting was explaining the correlation between farm-gate milk prices and trading at the Chicago Mercantile. Another issue discussed was the increasingly monopolistic character of the dairy industry.

State has authority, but needs farmer data As the days' lead speaker, Attorney General Spitzer was invited to describe the state's authority to take action on market concentration in the dairy industry. "Markets do not work unless rules of competition are maintained. The securities and anti-trust laws must be rigorously enforced," Spitzer said. "My office needs numbers and data collected with precision and care to make a case. We need to hear from producers. We can't do anything without that. If we can do something within the law, we will."

Richard Tulley liked what Spitzer had to say. "The door to his office is open for us to use. We need to report inequities and help change unfair practices," he said, "if

we are to receive a more equitable piece of the action."

Richard Tulley, Ed Waldroff and many other producers want to see more attention paid to the issues of consolidation and horizontal integration in the U.S. dairy industry. "Consolidation in production agriculture, both on the supply side and on the processing/retailing side, is occurring so fast it is hard to keep track."

"But the good news," Ed observes "is that consumers are paying attention!"

"Consumers want products that are produced locally and they want the profits to be returned to the producers," he has learned. "This has been proven in the market place and was shown here today by the presence of consumer organizations asking for our products."

Richard agrees. "The improved image of dairy products at the current time gives us a super opportunity to move the farm dairy price ahead."

He sees several steps ahead. First, we all need to understand the pricing structure, who makes the structure, and how it can be re-structured to work to the benefit of the farmer.

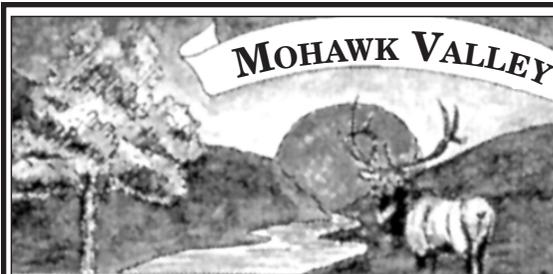
"We have an excellent opportunity to recruit the American public as our allies by enlightening our consumers on the differences between high-quality, American-produced products and less expensive inferior imports," Richard says. He wants consumers to understand that the imports do not meet the same guidelines as our domestic dairy products.

New Emphasis on Grassroots Leadership The day's speakers confirmed what many of us already knew, but what has become increasingly critical in our current dairy economy: we need strong leadership and grass-roots involvement in our cooperatives and agricultural organizations.

Carole Knight, a former Mid-America Dairyman Board member, urged the audience to remember that this must never be taken for granted. Dairy farmers cannot afford to overlook the importance of understanding the external market forces that influence the price they receive for their products.

Consolidation and mergers have increasingly challenged the ability of individual producers to stay informed and meaningfully involved with issues directly impacting their livelihood. When dairy farmer-members give up their personal control for any reason, whether benign neglect or exclusionary policies, they will lose in the end.

(Cont. on next page)



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PRODUCTION AND MANAGEMENT

Nutrient Management Planning: Small Farms Are Still Responsible

By Bill Henning

It now appears there will not be a legal requirement for many small farms to complete a "Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan" (CNMP) before 2010. While that is great economic news for many small farms, in no way does it relieve livestock producers from the legal obligation to ensure environmental quality. Any farm found guilty of causing pollution, regardless of size, plan or no plan, will answer to the requirements of the law.

But why wouldn't you want to have a nutrient management plan, anyway? Aside from the environmental benefits of sound nutrient management, agricultural history is replete with evidence that it makes good economic sense.

In 1868 the *Farmers and Mechanics Manual* by W.S. Courtney recommended the following:

1. Apply in the manure the full quantity of the different ash ingredients of the crops that will be produced before manure will be applied again.

2. Procure from abroad manure containing the full quantity of the different ash ingredients of all produce sold from the farm, and allow none to be wasted at home.

A close adherence to these two rules, accompanied by good cultivation, and the draining of such lands as needs draining, will make any farmer rich who exercises ordinary judgment and prudence in the management of his affairs."

The first *Feeds and Feeding* by W.A. Henry was published in 1898. It contained a chapter entitled "The Manurial Value of Feeding Stuffs". The message of this chapter was that the economic value of those nutrients found in manure should be considered whenever feeds were purchased - in addition to the feeding value.

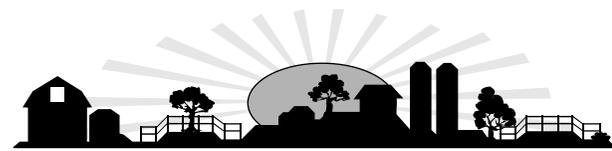
Following World War II fuel and fertilizer became cheap and abundant. This phenomenon changed our approach to farm mechanization and nutrient management. Conserving nutrients seemed less important.

During the 1970s when oil was in short supply, commercial fertilizer prices skyrocketed. In some cases phosphorus

could not even be obtained. Many farmers looked for ways to cut back on fertilizers. But when oil again became readily available, we quickly reverted back to our old tactics.

Today oil prices are again soaring. We don't know what the future holds. Right now it seems reasonable that mineral costs will escalate. If there was ever a time for planning nutrient flow, it is now. Nutrient management planning is still our responsibility, not only legally and ethically, but economically.

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



Concentration

(Cont. from previous page)

The story of Knight's struggle to have a voice in her cooperative and her subsequent termination as a MidAM (the former Mid-America Dairymen, a precursor to the current Dairy Farmers of America) director illustrated that in a compelling way. Knight told the story of a small cooperative that prided itself on its openness, accessibility and transparency. When a large cooperative took over, the climate changed to one where conflicting information and denials became commonplace.

The Knight's eventually won their suit but not before they lost their market for their milk and sold their dairy. She said that dairy farmers must understand their markets and pay close attention to leadership and management of the companies, cooperatives and agencies that make up the balance of the supply chain beyond the farm-gate.

For Knight, staying active means asking questions, staying informed, engaging in election processes, expressing one's viewpoints through whatever avenues are available to them, and advocating for their business and their industry.

That is a tall order when producers must manage the day-to-day workings of their operation. But as meeting attendees learned from Knight's story, the price of neglecting those responsibilities can be high.

TESTING THE LIMITS OF INFLUENCE

There may be limits to what can be done to effect change or influence much of what happens once our product leaves the farm, but these limits need to be tested. "We need to make sure there exists a level and fair playing field," according to Thomas Dubbs, an attorney, who shared his experiences with the National Cheese Exchange (NCE) and its impact on the price of cheese.

Dubbs described a lawsuit alleging price fixing. The case grew out of a 1996 study entitled "Cheese Pricing: A study of the National Cheese Exchange." The study was conducted by Willard F. Mueller, an agricultural economist and emeritus professor from the University of Wisconsin, and others. The report found that the price on 0.2 percent of all cheese produced was used in setting the price on 90 to 95% of the rest. "That simple fact creates a great incentive for attempting to influence the NCE," Dubs said. He discussed this and other studies that lead him to believe that cheese prices are determined by what he describes as "small, thin markets." This kind of market, as Dubs puts it "allows for fiddling."

NEW ALLIES CAN MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

As evidenced by the broad range of participants at the meeting, the importance of the dairy farm economy goes beyond the increasingly few people directly involved in production agriculture. Dairy farmers know they need to do more than produce excellent milk, and this meeting

showed them that other groups are asking how they can help.

State policy and legal challenges can level the playing field and improve economic equity of fluid milk production for individual producers. These will provide a more positive foundation. To really bring the dollars necessary for profitable farming in northern New York, however, new marketing connections that provide greater return to farms for premium quality and New York origin will have to be created and sustained.

Farmer Richard Tulley said after the consolidation meeting: "If all of the attending groups at this meeting worked together towards a system that shares the profits and the benefits, everyone would win."

We all feel a growing sense of urgency to encourage consumers to participate in a food system that ensures sufficient returns from high-quality products will come back to the producer. The fresh willingness to collaborate amongst organizations is a hopeful sign. It is the beginning of a well-crafted food-system strategy.

If you'd like to know how to get involved in advocating for fairer dairy markets, contact the National Family Farm Coalition at 1-800-639-3276 and ask for Molly Spence, or email her at molly@nffc.net with "Fairer Dairy Markets" in the subject line.

Molly Ames is Extension Educator for Cornell Cooperative Extension of Jefferson County, NY, specializing in Farm Business Management. This article is adapted from articles by Ms. Ames in the online magazine *New Farm* (www.newfarm.org) and *Watertown Daily Times*.

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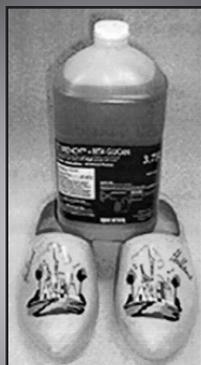
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STEWARDSHIP AND NATURE

Potato Leafhopper, Alfalfa and the Dog Days of Summer

By Ken Wise

The dog days of summer are here! You can hear children splashing in the pond, keeping cool on these hot, sultry days. Frogs echo from the fringes of ponds and cicadas hum from the top of trees. Fields of alfalfa, corn and grasses lay a beautiful patchwork of contrasting green squares amongst areas of forests. It is hard to imagine while admiring such an amazing landscape of farm and forest that earlier in the season there was an insect pest that had hitched a ride on thunder storms to feed on your alfalfa.

Yes, a lime-green insect about 1/8 inches long had ridden on the storms from the Southern United States looking for alfalfa and other host plants. This storm rider is potato leafhopper and it thrives during the dog days of summer. So while you're trying to keep cool in the local farm pond, potato leafhopper is having a merry ole time on your alfalfa fields.

Storm-riding adult potato leafhoppers are strong flyers and move from plant to plant, laying 2-3 eggs per day. Bright yellow-green nymphs hatch from the eggs in search of plant juices. The similar looking adult and nymph use their needle like mouth-part to inject it into the plant and suck plant juices. While the insects are sucking the plant juice they replace it with toxic saliva. Large infestations of potato leafhopper in alfalfa can reduce the plant protein by 5% and yield by a 1/2 ton per acre per cutting.



A variety of alfalfa that is resistant to potato leafhopper, top row, compared to a paler, susceptible variety below.

Photo by: Keith Waldron

Sequential Sampling Card for Potato Leafhopper

# of Samples	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8		9		10	
No Treat or Treat	N	T	N	T	N	T	N	T	N	T	N	T	N	T	N	T	N	T	N	T
<3"			2	9	4	11	5	13	7	15	9	16	11	18	13	20	19	20		
3"-6"			9	20	14	25	18	30	23	35	28	40	33	45	38	49	49	50		
7"-10"			19	41	29	50	39	60	49	70	59	80	69	90	79	100	99	100		
>10"			44	75	64	95	84	115	104	135	124	155	144	175	164	195	199	200		
Field Counts																				
Running Totals																				

N= No management needed at this time
T= Management needed as soon as possible

If you see V-shaped yellowing on the tips of the leaves there's a good chance potato leafhopper has been in your alfalfa. But it gets worse. If V-shaped yellowing has appeared you have already lost protein and yield, plus the alfalfa will have slower re-growth after harvest and increased chance of winter kill. You might think its time to just throw in the towel, but we can deal with this little beast by scouting fields on a weekly basis.

SCOUTING IS THE KEY

Scouting alfalfa fields is the key to early detection of potato leafhopper infestations. With the use of a 15-inch diameter sweep net you can determine if a potato leafhopper infestation has the potential to cause economic loss in alfalfa. Scouting for potato leafhopper starts after the first cutting of alfalfa (about the first part of June) till the first fall frost. You will want to use a potato leafhopper sequential sampling plan to determine if an infestation requires management or not.

The first thing to do is determine the height of your alfalfa. Smaller plants are more vulnerable to potato leafhopper; thus there are different action thresholds for different heights of alfalfa. The second thing you will need to know is how to sample for potato leafhopper. A sample is 10 sweeps of the net. A sweep is one pass in front of you as you walk through the alfalfa. The return swing is counted as another sweep.

Sequential sampling reduces the time spent in each field and tells you whether to treat (management action) or not treat (no management action). Use the Sequential Sampling Card to determine potato leafhopper infestation levels.

Write down the number of potato leafhoppers for each sample taken on the card. Add each sample to the next,

keeping a running total of potato leafhoppers. You will need to take at least 3 samples using the sequential sampling method. On the sequential sampling card "N" is defined as "no treatment (no management) needed at this time" and "T" is defined as "treatment (management) needed within in a week."

If your running total is smaller than N, stop and scout 7 days later. If the number of leafhoppers is larger than the "T" number then management action needs to be taken within a week. If the number of potato leafhoppers fall between "N" and "T" then continue and take the next sample till a decision can be determined.

Now you need to know what to do if an infestation reaches a management action level. The great part is you have three good options for controlling an infestation of potato leafhoppers in alfalfa.

Harvesting early can control potato leafhoppers if the field is within a week to ten days of a scheduled harvest. By harvesting the alfalfa early you remove the food source and prevent potato leafhopper from reaching infestation levels

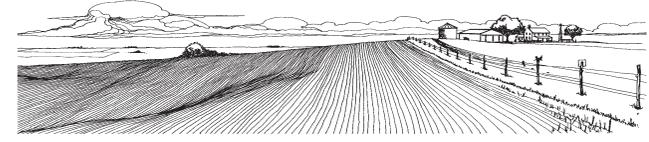
that can cause yield and quality loss to the forage. Make sure that the whole field is harvested at the same time. If a field is not clean harvested then the alfalfa that has not been cut will serve as a refuge for potato leafhoppers and can re-infest; thus severely damaging alfalfa re-growth.

To protect yield and health of new seedlings and established alfalfa, insecticide control can be employed when a field is not within a week of harvest. For selection of an insecticide consult the current issue of Cornell Guide for Integrated Field Crop Management. Remember to read the label and be aware of blooms, bees and the interval time the alfalfa can be harvested.

A third option for control is planting potato leafhopper resistant alfalfa. Research has shown that potato leafhopper resistant alfalfa is consistently higher in quality than susceptible with or without potato leafhopper pressure. The newer potato leafhopper resistant varieties have comparable yields to susceptible alfalfa.

As you enjoy the sights and sounds of summer while keeping cool, just remember that potato leafhopper may be having a party on your alfalfa. Scouting for potato leafhopper in alfalfa is the only way to know if they are there. Don't wait till it's too late or the storm riders may get your alfalfa!

Ken Wise is Eastern NY Livestock and Field Crops IPM Area Educator for Cornell Cooperative Extension/NYS IPM Program. If you would like further information on potato leafhopper and/or integrated pest management please contact Ken at (518) 462-2553 or klw24@cornell.edu, or visit the IPM website at www.nysipm.cornell.edu.





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NEW FARMERS

Beginner Farmers of New Hampshire: A Farmer-to-Farmer Learning Community

By Brandon Sussman

Beginner farmers face a number of challenges that can be addressed by connecting with experienced farmers. Many are financially burdened as a result of changing careers, or by a lack of knowledge about, or access to farm lending resources. And some are considering agricultural projects for which they are not technically prepared.

The Beginner Farmers of New Hampshire (BFNH) program attempts to identify and make available the resources necessary to meet these challenges. BFNH began in 1997 and is sponsored by the New Hampshire Resource, Conservation and Development Council and North American Heifer International. BFNH supports and encourages individuals wishing to start farming or gardening, and those who are currently farming.

BFNH was organized in 1996 by a small group of farmers who felt that beginner and novice farmers needed support. The program organizes and delivers that support to farmers. We provide technical support (livestock management, grazing, conservation, planting, and construction) and help with business and financial management, marketing, collaborative or cooperative buying and selling, and goal setting and achievement. The program also provides training and assistance to help beginning farmers identify what permits they must apply for and what grants are available. The program then helps farmers apply for them.

BNFH ACTIVITIES

The major activities of BFNH are at the county level where groups present seminars on topics such as hay equipment repair, getting started with dairy goats, bee

keeping, mushroom farming, financial accounting for farmers, and so on. Besides seminars, techniques used to communicate information to beginning farmers include farm tours, workshops, the planning and execution of marketing projects, and outreach using such avenues as a website and e-mail.

Seminar presenters are frequently drawn from a pool of people knowledgeable in agriculture including the staff of USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Farm Service Agency (FSA), University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension (both retired and current), and the private sector.

When practical, presenters are chosen from the program's current membership. For example, in the spring the manager of a major greenhouse operation presented a series of four meetings on seed-starting, which included a lab, lecture and problem solving.

The opportunity to network with farmers facing similar challenges is an important benefit of membership in BFNH. What beginning farmers can learn from others runs the gamut from "Where can I buy hay?" to "Can turkeys with lice be processed legally?"

BFNH also provides some introductory materials such as "The Beginning Farmer's Resource Guide," which was developed by a number of New Hampshire state agencies. They are also currently compiling some helpful resources and links on their website.

Some typical activities of Beginner Farmers of New Hampshire are:

- Organizing county and statewide farmer networks.
- Holding monthly network meetings in many counties for local farmers to meet each other and discuss their farms and experiences.
- Organizing meetings where speakers

What beginning farmers can learn from others runs the gamut from "Where can I buy hay?" to "Can turkeys with lice be processed legally?"

present training workshops and farm tours.

- Initiating cooperative activities such as group buying to receive bulk discounts.
- Providing opportunities for members to buy and sell products from each other.
- Helping to develop local markets for farmers' products.
- Developing relationships with local, county and state agricultural agencies to meet the unique needs of beginner or small-scale farmers.
- Researching potential funding and assistance sources available for farmers.
- Participating as the New Hampshire sponsor of the Tri-State Women's Agricultural Network.

A PARTNERSHIP EFFORT

Beginner Farmers of New Hampshire enjoys significant organizational, spiritual, financial and developmental assistance from the North American Heifer International Project. They provided the four northern counties of New Hampshire with a major seed-money grant; the six southern counties are currently preparing a grant application.

The Heifer Project also provides funds for several specific purposes such as acquiring and managing group equipment. It conducts a "pass on" program for breeding improvement. In this program, high quality breeding stock is placed with eligible recipients. In exchange, recipients are obligated to "pass on" in the future similar high-quality breeding stock. This is a model of sustainability and community development.

The New Hampshire RC&D provides significant administrative, management and fiscal assistance. BFNH has a generous grant from the Growing New Farmers (GNF) Program to be used for the development of a market program, and have obtained several smaller grants for selected narrow projects.

Beginner Farmers of New Hampshire is visible because of its website at www.beginnerfarmers.org. We also enjoy good relationships with the USDA, Cooperative Extension, and New Hampshire's Department of Agriculture. Local press provides good coverage of BFNH activities.

Both USDA and NRCS publicize many of our presentations, and federal agencies have generously provided farmers with information about the program. For example, there is a link to Beginner Farmers' website on the front page of New Hampshire's FSA website.

Many of BFNH's members attribute specific successful farming projects (chickens, beef cattle, etc.) to the support of this program. When state agricultural events occur, Beginner Farmers program is always invited because it is recognized as an important voice of the farming community. The efforts of BFNH may have contributed to an increase in the number of farms in New Hampshire reported in the census.

One of the biggest challenges for BFNH is learning to run a viable organization. Farmers typically are independent people, so getting cooperation for mutual benefit is challenging. This is especially so for members who lack knowledge, time, money and skills.

NEXT STEPS

The start-up phase of the BFNH is almost over, but the administration of a 'stable' group requires different skills. We are developing these skills now, working to establish systems, policies and procedures that make BFNH a stable, self-supporting organization. Due to the high level of involvement of outside management, BFNH has not yet developed its own sustaining structure, populated with people skilled in administration. All parties realize this, and we are making significant progress to address the issue.

We're also working to unify the statewide organization and make the county organizations stronger. Larger issues of policy, infrastructure, and some financial management are handled at the state level. True membership activities usually happen at the county level with events being open to the statewide group. Understanding this, plus building at the grassroots level and doing more projects that directly include the county members, is crucial to the growth and stability of BFNH.

Brandon Sussman is a member of Beginner Farmers of New Hampshire. This BFNH profile was written as part of the Growing New Farmer (GNF) Northeast project. Profiles of other programs for new farmers are available online at www.northeastnewfarmer.org or from the New England Small Farm Institute, 413-323-4531

RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT

Beginner Farmers of New Hampshire



BFNH is a farmer-to-farmer network that:

- Connects new farmers to a farming community where they can share ideas and information and access technical expertise and agricultural education.
- Helps small-scale and beginner farmers achieve their goals.
- Strengthens farm communities.
- Boosts the agricultural industry and economy.
- Improves the quality of life in New Hampshire.

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NH RC&D Area Councils
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 Laconia, NH 03246-2772
 603-527-2093
lisa@beginnerfarmers.org

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RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT**Small Farm Magazines**

If you enjoy reading Small Farm Quarterly, you might also want to read other magazines written for small farmers. These magazines are a great way to learn about what's working for other small farmers. Their articles can help you get new ideas and inspirations for your farm. Small farm magazines are also a great place to find out about new products and publications.

Although many magazines address the needs of small farmers, those listed here are devoted specifically to a small farm audience.

AMERICAN SMALL FARM

267 Broad Street
Westerville, OH 43081
(614) 895-3755
www.smallfarm.com
Monthly, \$18/yr

This monthly magazine covers a wide range of small farm topics, including equipment, alternative enterprises, pest management, and more. Monthly special sections rotate between aquaculture, greenhouse production, organic farming, and articles for "outdoor enthusiasts".

FARMING: PEOPLE, LAND, AND COMMUNITY

PO Box 85,
Mount Hope, OH 44660
www.farmingmagazine.net
Quarterly, \$18/yr

This beautiful magazine offers stories and practical advice on farming and rural life. Their mission states: "Farming Magazine celebrates the joys of farming well and living well on a small and ecologically conscious scale."

SMALL FARM DIGEST

Stop 2215, USDA-CSREES
Waterfront Centre
800 9th Street, SW.
Washington, DC 20024
(800) 583-3071
2 issues per year, free
www.csrees.usda.gov/news-

room/newsletters/smallfarmdigest/sfd.html
Small Farm Digest is published by the USDA Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service. It covers a wide range of topics of interest to small farmers. Small Farm Digest comes out twice a year. It is free, and back issues can be viewed online.

SMALL FARMER'S JOURNAL

PO Box 1627,
Sisters, OR 97759

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www.smallfarmersjournal.com
Quarterly, \$30/yr

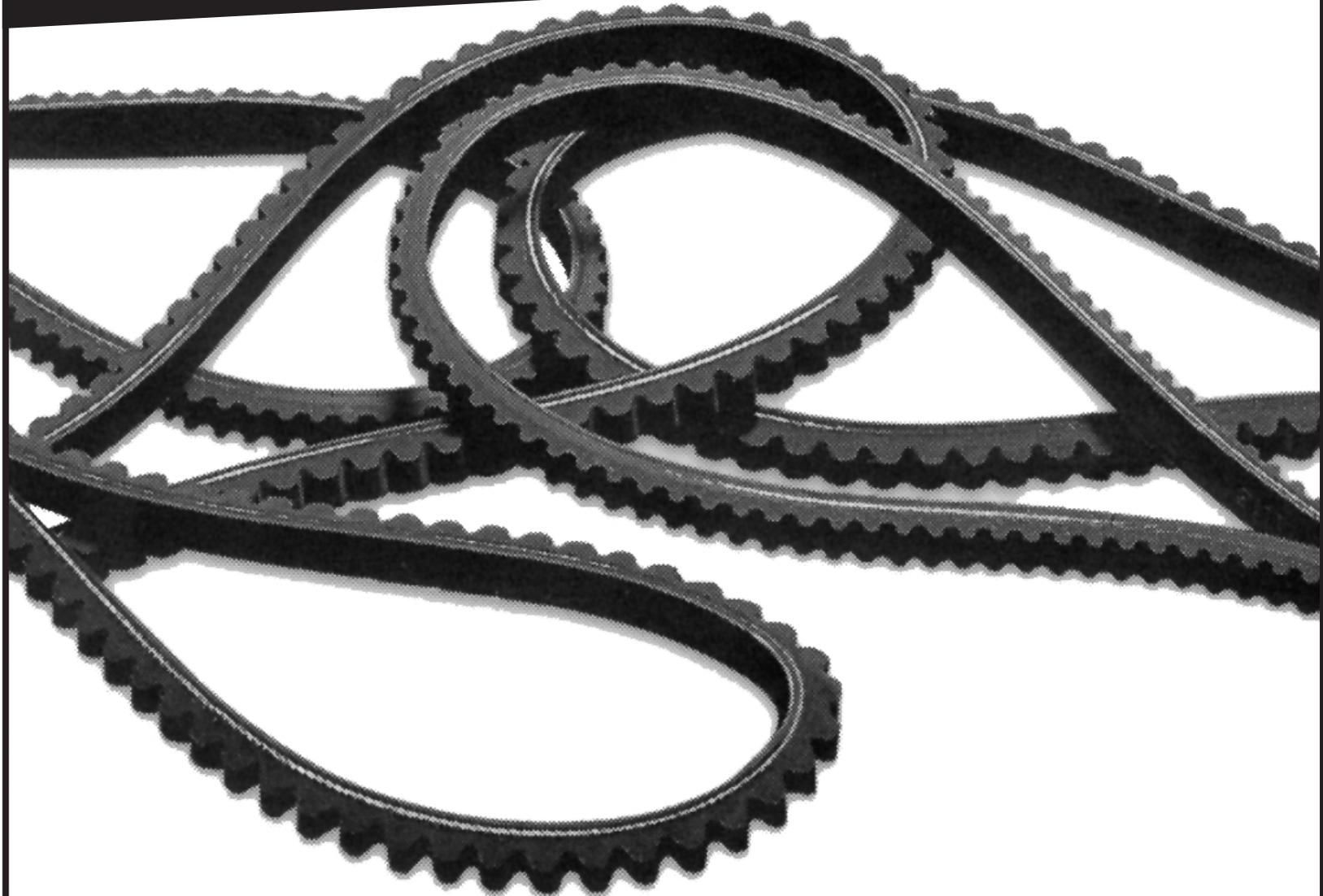
As much a work of art as it is a magazine, Small Farmer's Journal will require special space on your shelf - it is 130 or more pages long, and measures 11" wide and 14" tall. It emphasizes horse-powered farming, but it also covers a wide range of practical farming and rural living topics. Small Farmer's Journal features beautiful illustrations from old-time farming publications, and often reprints agricultural writings from the pre-tractor era.

SMALL FARM TODAY

3903 W. Ridge Trail Rd,
Clark, MO 65243
(800) 633-2535
www.smallfarmtoday.com
Bi-monthly, \$23.95/year.

This magazine for small farmers has a strong emphasis on alternative marketing strategies and enterprise options. Small Farm Today also features excellent book and new product reviews. It has a special emphasis on alternative livestock breeds and species.

Eric Toensmeir, New England Small Farm Institute.

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