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MAY 2021

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Getting their hands dirty

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A legacy of growth and change

Bart Krisle leaves TFC financially strong with a plan in place for the future



Glen Liford

Editor

When I first heard that Bart Krisle was retiring as Tennessee Farmers Cooperative chief executive officer, I couldn't really say I was surprised. It was another significant change for TFC during a tumultuous year, and if we've learned anything during the past 15 months, it's to expect the unexpected.

Against the background of the pandemic, TFC was implementing a plan to pursue strategic alliances through the formation of joint venture (JV) companies. Two of those ventures are now active — Faithway Alliance and GreenPoint Ag. A third will be finalized soon.

Such significant change would pose a challenge for any company, but it could be overwhelming for one so steeped in tradition as Co-op. Bart recognized this potential pitfall and chose to clearly communicate the reasons behind the changes. He assured all those involved that the purpose of TFC remained intact: to serve the member Co-ops and help them to be profitable.

Bart's efforts during this past year included regular video addresses to the employees, keeping us all focused. He communicated openly and frequently throughout the process of forming the JVs. Whatever the format, his messages helped maintain employee morale throughout what could have been a difficult time. His approach squashed many unfounded rumors before they had a chance to develop.

Bart took over as CEO after Vernon Glover's retirement in 2005. Since that time, sales have risen from \$521.6 million in 2006 to \$628.9 million in 2020. Peak sales occurred in 2012 with a record \$814 million. Over the past 10 years, TFC has returned more than \$169.5 million in cash to member cooperatives, \$4.7 million in member programs, \$126.7 million in cash patronage, and \$38.2 million in redeemed allocated reserves. That's an average of almost \$17 million per year.

During a time when nationwide market forces were at work to make it more challenging for a regional co-op, TFC remained financially strong and relevant to its member owners.

Throughout the pandemic, JV transition, and indeed, his entire tenure, Bart has been a good communicator and a strong motivator. He has led by example. His personality has been a good fit with the family-style culture of TFC. He has been consistent and has set the tone for the culture of this cooperative.

Even his retirement has served as another example of Bart's dedication to the Co-op system as his efforts in transitioning to a new CEO have made the process almost seamless. The board selected Shannon Huff as the one to follow Bart. Shannon's experience and background — coupled with a deep understanding of the business and its ultimate purpose — made him a wise choice. He has been deeply involved in the implementation of the JV strategy and the development of the vision for the future. The senior team's strategic plan is already in place, and the staff is ready to carry on.

Bart has left TFC in qualified, capable hands, and the business remains in solid financial shape with a clear plan for the future.

What better legacy could anyone ask for?



TFC Chief Executive Officer Bart Krisle announced that he will retire June 4 after a career spanning 38 years, including the last 14 as CEO.

CEO transition

Shannon Huff becomes seventh to lead Tennessee Farmers Cooperative

By Glen Liford

Tennessee Farmers Cooperative Board Chairman Mark Thompson announced on behalf of the entire TFC board on March 10 that Shannon Huff of Bell Buckle has been selected to succeed Bart Krisle as chief executive officer of TFC.

Krisle announced that he will retire June 4 after a career spanning 38 years, including the last 14 as CEO. He joined the TFC staff in 1983 as a field auditor and has served in various capacities within the cooperative through the years. In 1987, he was named to the Internal Auditing Department staff and in 1988 became manager of the Member Support Department in the information services area. Krisle was named Region 2 operations specialist in 1992 and held that position until being selected to fill the role of chief operating officer in 1999.

“As CEO, Bart’s steady and thoughtful leadership has been invaluable during a period of unprecedented growth and change for TFC,” says Thompson. “His work in establishing Co-op Financial Solutions and GreenPoint Ag strengthened the organization and positioned the cooperative to make the key strategic alignments that have led to the creation of the Faithway Alliance and GreenPoint Ag joint ventures (JV) and the feed JV that is in the formation process. His work with the TFC senior staff and leadership team over the last year has provided the mission, vision, values, and strategic plan that will guide our cooperative for the next few years and provide clear direction as we change the structure of TFC to a business service provider.”

Huff has played a key role in developing and implementing this strategic plan as well, says Thompson.

“As we begin the cooperative’s 76th year, Shannon becomes only the seventh person to lead TFC as CEO,” says Thompson. “His depth of experience and vision for the future are among the many qualities that make him the right person to take the



helm of TFC during this critical transition period.”

Huff had served as TFC chief financial officer since 2006 before being appointed CEO.

“It is truly an honor to be chosen as chief executive officer,” says Huff. “The Co-op has been part of my life since I was

(See CEO transition, page 6)

CEO transition

(continued from page 5)

a child, and I have spent my career learning from and working with great people in a system with a noble cause – the farmer.

“I want to be very clear when I say that our focus has been, and will continue to be, on the member Co-ops. My career has proven many things to me, not the least of which is that we are better when we work together. I see those opportunities in our future. When you reflect on the history of TFC and the member Co-ops, there are so many success stories, and I believe many more lie ahead. Thank you, Bart, for the career you built at TFC, but more specifically, your role as CEO. Many success stories in our cooperative history have been written during your tenure, and your impact will be felt for many years to come. One of those impacts will be the strategic plan to partner with other strong, like-minded cooperatives.”

Along with Krisle, Huff was instrumental in the development of Co-op Financial Solutions (CFS), which is now utilized by more than 90 percent of member cooperatives and is TFC’s largest patronage income department. He has more than 33 years of experience with TFC, having joined the cooperative in 1988 as a field auditor before transitioning to the role of corporate accountant in 1993, where he was responsible for the corporate Accounts Receivable Department. In 1999, Huff became manager of Field Audit/Regional Accounting where he served until 2006 when he was selected as chief financial officer.

Huff is a certified public accountant and holds a bachelor’s degree in accounting from Tennessee Technological University in Cookeville. He grew up on a small farm in Fentress County.

He and his wife, Laura, have two children, daughter, Niki and son, Tyler.

Co-op is recognized as one of the strongest federated farm supply cooperative systems in the nation and includes Tennessee Farmers Cooperative (TFC), the 47 member Co-ops, and 11 associate members in neighboring states that own TFC. At the very foundation are the roughly 70,000 farmers who are member-owners of the local Co-ops in their home counties. Some 164 Co-op retail outlets, which operate in 84 of Tennessee’s 95 counties, and across the border in five neighboring states, serve more than half a million customers. Learn more at www.ourcoop.com.



Kirk Fisher



Phillip Farmer

Senior staff appointments

Fischer is CFO; Farmer is COO

Kirk Fischer has been selected to replace Shannon Huff as Tennessee Farmers Cooperative chief financial officer and Phillip Farmer was chosen as chief operating officer. Farmer replaces Jim McWherter who retired from TFC after a 47-year Co-op career in October 2020.

“Both Kirk and Phillip bring important expertise and experience to their new roles,” says TFC Chief Executive Officer Shannon Huff. “Their efforts will be crucial as we follow the strategic direction for increased cooperation through the joint venture strategy and continue to enhance TFC’s value to our member Co-ops and contract customers.”

Fischer had served as internal auditor since March 2016. He joined TFC in 2003 as a corporate accountant, then transitioned to senior regional accountant in 2013, a role he held until being appointed internal auditor. He holds a master’s degree in accounting and a bachelor’s in business administration from Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro. Fischer is a certified public accountant and a member of the Institute of Internal Auditors.

Born in Peru, Ind., Fischer grew up in nearby Rochester, graduating from Rochester High School in 1998. He and

his wife, Jaime, a former employee of TFC Risk Management, live in Murfreesboro. They have four children — Audrey, 19, who is attending Motlow Community College to become a paramedic; Wyatt, 9; and twins Wes and Theo, 3.

Farmer was named TFC chief marketing officer in January 2019. He brings more than 25 years of experience in business leadership, strategic thinking, planning, marketing, and business developments to his new role. He is the leader, entrepreneur, and founder of FLM Harvest, a strategic consulting, marketing, and communications agency, and The Farmer Group Ltd.

During his tenure as chief marketing officer, Farmer transformed the marketing and communications efforts of TFC for core business units, member Co-ops, and joint ventures while reducing administrative overhead.

Farmer grew up on a corn, soybean, wheat, and cattle farm in northern Ohio, and holds a bachelor’s degree from The Ohio State University. He has two children, Rory, 19, a freshman at Bowling Green State University, and Quinten, 16, a sophomore in high school. He and his fiancé, Tammy Eckhart, plan to marry on May 14, and they will reside in Mt. Juliet.

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The team from News Channel 2 prepares their omelet at the National Ag Day Omelet Cook-off to show their support of the ag industry. Their team received an award for Best Presentation. From left are Neil Orne, Nikki Burdine, Elizabeth Lane, and Kristina Shalhoup.

Omelets and agriculture

Nashville news anchors participate in a cook-off as Gov. Lee proclaims Tennessee Ag Day



News Channel 4 anchor, Cody Murphy, shows off his cooking skills as he prepares his omelet to present to the judges. His team with WSMV partner, Joe Dubin, received the Best Tasting ribbon.

Story and photos by Cara Moore

Nashville's Farmers Market was recently the scene of a hot competition.

On March 23, Farm and Forest Families of Tennessee hosted the National Ag Day Omelet Cook-off at the iconic Farmers Market in downtown Nashville as agricultural industry representatives and Nashville television news station personalities came together to raise awareness and show their appreciation for Tennessee's farming industry.

"We have a lot of amazing, hard-working farmers around the state," said Channel 5 meteorologist Cody Murphy. "We were proud to use local produce as ingredients for our omelets to showcase our appreciation of these folks."

In addition to Murphy and WSMV partner Joe Dubin, local anchors teams from WKRN Channel 2, WSMJ Channel 4, and RFD-TV raced against the clock to prepare their omelets for judging. Competitors included Neil Orne and Kristina Shalhoup, Channel 2; Nikki Bur-

dine and Elizabeth Lane, Channel 2; Henry Rothenberg and Steve Layman, Channel 5; Dubin and Murphy, Channel 4; Tammi Arender and Kelly Theiss, RFD-TV. Judges for the event were Jeff Aiken, Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation president; Tennessee Commissioner of Agriculture Charlie Hatcher, D.V.M.; and Julie Giles, Executive Director of the Farm Animal Care Coalition of Tennessee (FACCT).

RFD-TV brought home the Best in Show championship title for their omelet.

Almost all of the ingredients used in the competition were locally grown and produced. Neil Orne, Channel 2, used fresh eggs from the hens that his daughter raised, while Tammi Arender from RFD-TV proudly claimed that every ingredient in her omelet, except for the salt and pepper, came from a Tennessee farm.

"As a mother, I'm really passionate about knowing where the food comes from that I feed my daughter," said Nikki Burdine, anchor with News Channel 2. "Knowing that it's fresh and local really matters to me."

The cook-off was staged in conjunction with National Agriculture Day to show ap-

preciation of the hard-working farmers and forestry workers who lay the foundation for the nation's economy and to celebrate the contribution of agriculture in the daily lives of Americans. Governor Bill Lee — a fellow farmer — recognized the importance of the Tennessee's agriculture industry by proclaiming March 23 as Tennessee Ag Day.

Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation President Jeff Aiken said the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic have highlighted the importance of American farmers.

"Since the beginning of our country, agriculture has been essential, but throughout the past year, many people have seen a small glimpse of just how essential farmers are," said Aiken, a Washington Farmers Co-op member. "That's why — this year especially — celebrating National Ag Day and Week is incredibly important to honor those in agriculture who deserve to be praised every day."

Valerie Bass, executive director of the Tennessee Beef Industry Council, noted the integral role that farmers play in creating a sustainable economy and the importance of spreading that message to others.

"Many people do not realize the work that goes into raising fresh farm products," said Bass. "We want to give those people an avenue for information and education, and hopefully get them even more interested in agriculture. Farmers do so much for us every day, so we always like to take time to honor them and to call special attention to agriculture."

Agriculture is Tennessee's largest industry; the state's agriculture and forestry sectors contribute roughly \$81 million annual economic activity and provide over 342,000 jobs. Tennessee's landscape is dominated by 66,000 farms that encompass 10.8 million acres, or 40 percent of the state's total land area.



The Farm and Forest Families of Tennessee presented a \$1,000 check to Second Harvest Food Bank in honor of the RFD-TV winning team. Second Harvest Food Bank is dedicated to sourcing local produce and supporting Tennessee farmers. The organization's Farm to Families program supplies healthy food to communities that need it the most. From left, Jeff Aiken, president of Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation; Commissioner of Agriculture Charlie Hatcher, DVM; RFD-TV participants Tammi Arender and Kelly Theiss; Julie Giles, Farm Animal Care Coalition of Tennessee executive director; and Lee Maddox, chairman of Farm and Forest Families of Tennessee.



LEFT: The omelet judges were, from left, Julie Giles, executive director of Farm Animal Care Coalition of Tennessee; Jeff Aiken, President of Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation; and Charlie Hatcher, DVM, Tennessee Commissioner of Agriculture. RIGHT: Omelets were made from locally grown and produced ingredients to show support for hard-working farmers across the state.



LEFT: RFD-TV news anchors Tammi Arender (left) and Kelly Theiss received the Best in Show and Best Tennessee Products ribbons. They encourage others to tell the stories of farmers and ranchers every day. RIGHT: The News Channel 5 team consisting of anchors Henry Rothenberg (right) and Steve Layman cook up a flavorful omelet that earned them the Most Creative Award.

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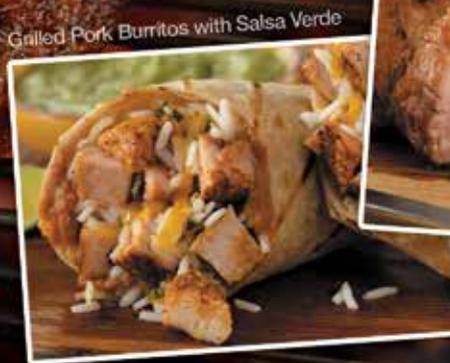
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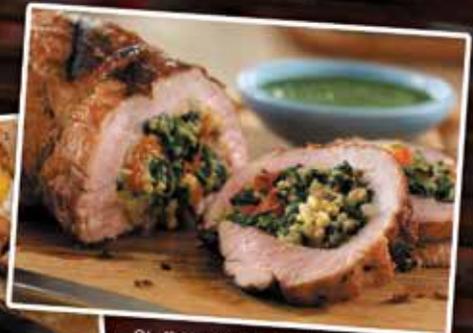
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2021 outlook

U.S. farmers expect to plant more corn and soybean acreage

By Allison Farley

Based on a Prospective Plantings report released on March 31 from the USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), U.S. farmers intend to plant an estimated 91.1 million acres of corn in 2021, up less than 1 percent from last year.

Acreage intentions for corn are up or unchanged in 24 of the 48 estimating states. The largest increases are expected in the Dakotas, where producers intend to plant a combined 8.9 million acres, an increase of 2 million acres from 2020. Producers across most of the Corn Belt intend to plant fewer acres than last year. If realized, the planted area of corn in Idaho and Oregon will be the largest on record.

Soybean growers intend to plant 87.6 million acres in 2021, up 5 percent from last year. If realized, this will be the third highest planted acreage on record. Compared with last year, planted acreage is expected to be up or unchanged in 23 of the 29 states estimated.

According to the NASS Tennessee field office, corn acreage planted in the state is estimated at 1 million acres, a 130,000-acre increase over last year. Tennessee farmers intend to plant 1.7 million acres of soybeans, up 50,000 acres from 2020.

Planting estimates for other Tennessee crops as compared to national statistics:

- Upland cotton acreage to be planted in Tennessee is forecast at 290,000 acres, up 50,000 acres from 2020. The U.S. total upland cotton acreage is estimated at 11.9 million

acres, down slightly from the previous year.

- For the burley-producing states, growers intend to set 40,850 acres, 6 percent below last year.

- Producers intend to set 5,800 acres of dark-fired tobacco in Tennessee, which is unchanged from the previous year. Acreage set to dark-air tobacco was estimated at 3,900 acres, up 200 acres from 2020.

- Winter wheat seeded by Tennessee farmers in the fall of 2020 totaled 400,000 acres, up 100,000 acres from the previous year. Seeded acreage for the nation was 33.1 million acres, up 9 percent from 2019.

- Farmers in the state intend to harvest 1.7 million acres of hay, down 49,000 acres from 2020. U.S. farmers intend on harvesting 51.7 million acres of hay in 2021, down 1 percent from last year.



According to the USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service, acreage intentions for corn are up or unchanged in 24 of the 48 estimating states including Tennessee. Corn acreage planted in the state is estimated at 1 million acres, a 130,000-acre increase over last year.

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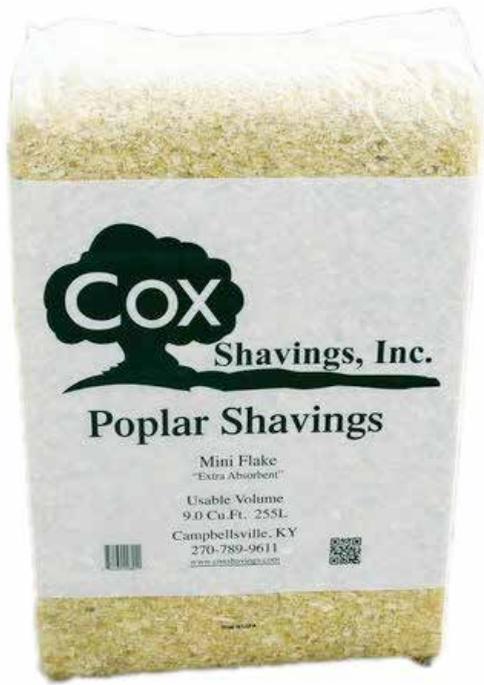
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----- NEIGHBORLY ADVICE



By Grey Parks, TFC Equine Specialist

Grazing muzzles

Important tools in equine weight management

Horses that require fewer calories than average to maintain their body condition are often referred to as “easy keepers.” However, true easy keepers are often anything but easy to manage.

Easy keepers require extra care and attention to prevent obesity, which can lead to serious health conditions such as laminitis. A grazing muzzle is a useful tool in controlling forage intake for these horses, while still allowing them to socialize with their herd mates.

A grazing muzzle is a plastic or web “cup” that fits over a horse’s muzzle. There is a small hole in the bottom of the muzzle, which limits the amount of forage a horse can grab in a single mouthful. Muzzles come in two basic varieties: all-in-one halter/muzzle combos and separate muzzles made to be attached to the horse’s regular halter.

Whichever model you choose, it is important to make sure that the halter is a breakaway or thin leather variety, in case the horse gets tangled in a tree or other object in its pasture. You should also check the halter and muzzle daily for fit and signs of rubbing. Some muzzle manufacturers sell neoprene padding to be used on areas of the muzzle that rub. Self-adhesive bandage material or duct tape is also handy for this purpose. (I recommend choosing a brightly colored bandage or tape to help you locate the muzzle in case your horse loses it somewhere in the pasture.)

Why muzzle instead of housing the horse in a stall or dry lot? Horses kept in small paddocks or stalls spend very little time moving around, unlike pastured horses that move consistently all day long. With a horse that needs to lose or maintain its weight, every calorie burned is important. Horses are herd animals, and most are therefore much happier turned out with their herd rather than isolated in a small area. Muzzling allows the horse to graze continuously, reducing the risk of gastric ulcers when compared to meal feeding. Using a grazing muzzle also provides a more reliable restriction of a horse’s forage intake than short-duration grass turnout. While grazing muzzles may reduce a horse’s intake

by as much as 85 percent, most horses that are turned out for only a few hours at a time will consume just as much forage as horses that are out 24/7!

As with any other change in a horse’s diet, a grazing muzzle should be introduced gradually. Some horses object strongly to wearing a muzzle at first and may try to rub or paw the muzzle off. I like to place a small treat inside the muzzle every time I put it on the horse to make the process more pleasant for both the horse and myself. Other horses may become very frustrated when their initial grazing attempts are thwarted and stop trying to eat at all for a period of time. You may need to feed the horse a few blades of

grass through the hole to help him learn how the muzzle works.

Start by putting the muzzle on for only a short period of time and monitoring the horse for signs of distress or confusion. Most horses quickly figure out how to graze while wearing a muzzle, but some take more time than others. Keep in mind, too, that your horse probably won’t be able to lick a salt block while wearing a muzzle, so you will need to either offer him muzzle-free time to access salt or top-dress his feed with loose salt daily.

Very few horses enjoy wearing a grazing muzzle, but most will learn to accept one after a careful introduction.





By Chris Bowman, Faithway Customer Care Representative

Time to get growing

Make preparations now for summer gardens

May is the month to get your summer garden started and plant everything you want before hot weather sets in. Here are some suggestions for your May gardening:

Water, water, water

Make sure to water everything that has been newly planted. It doesn't take much for transplants to dry out and die before they have a chance to get established. Check every day for adequate moisture until plants take off and start to grow.

Give a healthy prune

Prune back spent flowers on your perennials. This will manicure your garden and

can stimulate reblooming of delphinium and columbine, as well as other perennials. Selectively prune spring-flowering shrubs such as azalea, forsythia, weigela, lilac, beauty bush, and mockorange to control their growth and improve their shape. It will also increase their bloom next year.

Stagger seeding for results

Stagger planting by seeding every week or two through July so you have flowers and vegetables in the garden until frost.

Get more flowers

When planting summer annuals, consider pinching and removing the flowers to stimulate branching and the production of many more flowers.

Use fungicide when needed

Spray fruit trees and grapes early in the month with preventative fungicides. Don't use insecticides until all blooms have disappeared or you may harm the bees.

Support your vines

Be sure to train new vines onto trellises or posts with the aid of twine. Use plastic twine to support the weight of the vine throughout the growing season.

Interested in starting a garden this year, but don't know where to start? Head down to your local Co-op for all your supplies, tools, and more. The knowledgeable staff will be there to answer questions and help you pick the right plants and planters. Happy summer planting!





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Dresden FFA members complete their chores of feeding the livestock on the farm of Weakley County Schools Livestock Program. Left to right: Brock Ellis, Spencer Davis, and Kendall Brewer help on the farm during their class time and enjoy watching the cattle and calves in the field.

Getting their hands dirty

Weakley County Schools gives students real life experiences with livestock and working on a farm

Story and photos by Hannah Nave Lewis and Cara Moore

Wweakley County Schools agriculture students are getting their hands dirty – in a good way.

“I’ve always said there’s no better place to learn than on the farm,” says Dresden ag teacher and Weakley County Schools Livestock Program Farm Manager Jason Kemp. “You can learn about hard work, ethics, and leadership on a farm at an early age. The best classroom is the farm itself.”

In this case, the school’s farm is just a short walk from the Dresden High School (DHS) campus. Acquired by the system in the late 1960s, the 65-acre property comprises up to 30-head swine facility and 12 head of cattle.

“Students have the opportunity to be around swine and cattle on a daily basis and to follow the process from start to finish,” says Kemp. “They get a clear picture of what farming is all about and understand that it’s a lot of hard work for the farmer. What we do with a

student in four years of high school will affect them for many decades in the workforce.”

The Weakley County Schools Livestock Program (WCSLP) has been a part of the school for several generations. DHS agriculture teacher and farm manager, V.J. Shanklin started the farm in the late 1960’s and was followed by Larry Houston and Ray Griffith. Kemp stepped into the role farm manager in 2017. Then the school focused on replacement and market animals, but now the focus is on raising quality stock for meat in grade and yield. Kemp was able to stock the herd with 10 bred Angus-based heifers and a registered SimAngus bull donated by Slate Farms in Vanleer, Tenn.

“My plan was to do something with the things we were producing here other than just selling at market,” Kemp says. “I wanted to make something relevant, and supplying quality products and education at the same time is a great way to achieve that relevance. I also wanted to provide students with a well-rounded curriculum.”

Under his guidance, the livestock program’s core subjects include small and large animal science and pre-veterinary medicine.

“The beauty of this farm is that it serves as a hands-on lab,” explains Kemp. “It’s a lot different teaching subcutaneous and intramuscular injections on an orange or banana in the classroom versus having the ability to actually do it on baby pigs. Having to administer vaccines to live animals gives students a whole new perspective and level of responsibility.”

Kemp has expanded the livestock program into new avenues by adding real-life economics to the technical side of farming. The most recent venture is the Weakley County School’s freezer beef and pork program which began in 2019. Kemp says the community support of the program has been “outstanding.”

“We’re not having any problems selling our products,” he says. “We have over 30 regular customers who buy freezer beef from us — either a quarter, half, or full.”

Starting in the spring of 2021, the farm expanded to selling USDA inspected meat as well. The school farm currently offers ground

beef and filets, but Kemp says that he plans to have more variety of steaks in the future. They have a larger selection of pork products for sale including pork cutlets, shoulder steaks, roasts, bacon, sausage, bratwursts, pork burger, and ribs, all USDA-inspected and available for sale to the public.

WCSLP piloted a program with the DHS cafeteria in November 2019 with serving their pork to all DHS students. Because of that success the program was expanded in January of 2020, and now all Weakley County School cafeterias serve WCSLP pork.

“Our program’s market expanded in November 2019 when we started distributing sausage from our swine facility to all nine school cafeterias in Weakley County,” Kemp says. “The program has been temporarily shut down due to COVID-19, but we’re confident that distribution of the sausage in the school cafeterias will resume next August.”

Spencer Davis, a Dresden FFA member and ag student, says having the products in the school cafeterias is helping the younger generation understand where food is coming from.

“It’s cool to see younger kids eating our pork, and they know that everything was produced right here, just right down the road from their own school,” Davis says. “Once they get to high school, I’m sure they’ll want to take an ag class and understand agriculture, too.”

Kemp says that establishing relationships with the retail sector is a valuable part of that understanding, and he works hard to incorporate it into the farming operation. Tosh Farms, the largest pork producer in Tennessee, is a big supporter of the program and has developed a protocol for students that outlines exactly what skills and training the high school should provide in their ag program to



LEFT: WCSLP Farm Manager and former President of the National Association of Agriculture Educators Jason Kemp shows off some Weakley County Schools Livestock Farm pork burgers. The school’s meat selection includes sausage, bacon, ground beef, and a variety of roasts. Because of a COVID-19 relief grant, the school has a large selection of freezers to store and sell meat from. **RIGHT:** Devon Patton, junior at Dresden High School, helps on the farm mixing their beef cattle ration. The pigs are on a strict ration blended from three different Co-op feeds and the cattle receive a 14% complete pellet from Weakley Farmers Co-op.



specifically prepare participants for a career at their company.

“We have a unique situation where we can train kids, and when they leave high school, they can go right into that job sector,” says Kemp. “Tosh Farms has opportunities in 15 different areas in swine production, not to mention ag mechanics, welding, electricity, and more. So my students are already learning what they would do to go out and work in agriculture after graduation.”

Weakley Farmers Co-op is among the supporters and ag input suppliers to the program. Kemp, a longtime member, makes sure to use Co-op feeds for the school’s livestock. He also turns to the Co-op for advice with new issues, help mixing his feed rations, medications, and other concerns related to the farm.

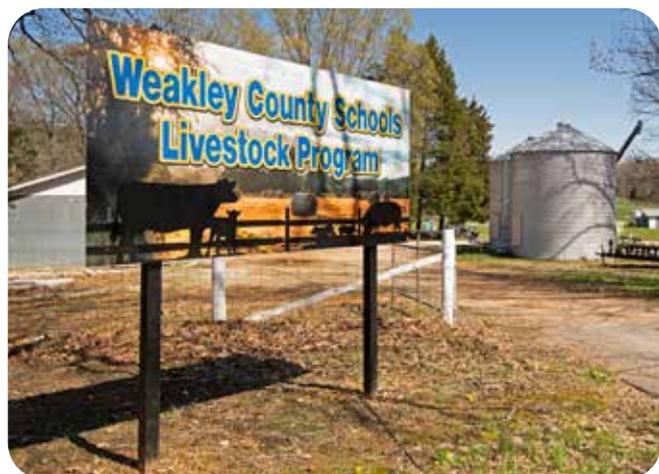
“Working directly with the Co-op is just another way that we expose our students to the way agriculture is conducted in the real world,” Kemp says. “Co-op is a big part of that.”

Dresden FFA member and ag student Kendall Brewer says the structure of the program has allowed her to fulfill the three-circle model: FFA, Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE), and classroom work. She is learning about agriculture and livestock in the classroom, experiencing it on the farm, and then taking that skill and knowledge home to apply on her own farm which is her SAE.

“I didn’t really grow up on a farm,” says Brewer, a junior at the high school. “I started farming when my family moved to a farm in Weakley County, so I’ve learned things in this program that I can take back home, as well as things from home that I can bring back here.”

She adds that the program also inspires students to understand the many pathways available within the ag industry.

“Through the ag program and Mr. Kemp, I’ve developed an interest in becoming a vet tech,” says Brewer. “I wouldn’t have known it was an option — and that I had a passion for it — without this experience.”



LEFT: The 50-acre farm is located next door to the Dresden High School campus and easily accessible from the agriculture classrooms. The students have a short walk from the school to the farm to get started on their chores. **RIGHT:** The Dresden High School agriculture class is all-hands-on-deck for daily activities on the farm. Front row: Jason Kemp, Gracey Adams, Janelle Tanis, Olivia Woodruff, Kendall Brewer, Faith Skinner, Preasley Yates. Back row: Curtis Swafford, Brock Ellis, Spencer Davis, Devon Patton, Ethan Milan.

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Madisonville beekeeper Eddie Lovin looks on as Scott Venable, president of the Monroe County Beekeepers Association (MCBA), delivers comments at the March 19 dedication of a new apiary at the grounds of the recently opened Monroe County Justice Center.

Community buzz

AgCentral Cooperative is part of a joint effort to raise the profile of honey bees in Monroe County

Story and photos by Mark E. Johnson

Honey bees are on the rise in Madisonville. In fact, at least 40,000 have recently been relocated to the newly opened, \$30 million Monroe County Justice Center.

Two hives — the first of four — were installed on the grounds of the facility as part of a joint effort spearheaded by the Monroe County Beekeepers Association (MCBA). With the blessings of the Mayor's office and the Justice Center, some three acres of greenspace surrounding the state-of-the-art structure have been earmarked as a community apiary that will serve as a living educational exhibit. The apiary was dedicated at a March 19 event attended by MCBA members and various community leaders, including AgCentral Cooperative Madisonville Store Manager Mark Mills, whose Co-op donated various items to the endeavor.

"We were just honored to be involved with such a worthwhile project," says Mills, not-

ing that the Co-op donated geotextile fabric, rebar, and 5,000 square feet of crimson clover seed. "This is exactly the type of positive community effort that we like to be a part of. In addition to serving Madisonville-area beekeepers, this apiary will raise community awareness of the importance of pollinators as they relate to agriculture."

The project was initiated when the MCBA began scouting for an appropriate spot for new training grounds, says association president Scott Venable.

"Interest in beekeeping has really taken off over the past several years, so we were looking for a central location that could serve as an operating apiary that would allow us to do workshops and training for new beekeepers," says Venable. "This need happened to coincide with the completion of the new Justice Center. We approached the Mayor's office, and they put us in touch with Brandon West, the county maintenance director. Before long, we had permission to create an apiary on the site."

West says the project was the "perfect fit" for the new facility.

"The Justice Center was a major undertaking — nearly 12 years in the making — so we were anxious to find ways to draw community attention to it," West explains. "The apiary site just seemed like a logical location — out away from the building, plenty of parking space, and lots of room for the MCBA to do their presentations and training."

There are also plans, West adds, to create an outreach program allowing some of the inmates to help care for the hives.

"We feel like this has the potential to be a great learning experience," says West. "Inmates could practice valuable skills that could benefit them personally as well as their community in the future. We just see a lot of positive directions this project can go."

Venable says that as the apiary began to come together, the project grew in scope. In

(See Community buzz, page 24)



LEFT: The MCBA set up an information table at the event which included educational literature and various honey flavors and samples. RIGHT: Members of the association on hand for the opening of the apiary included (front row, from left) Susan Bonham, Bob Coles (MCBA vice president), Coley ODeil (seated, Tennessee Beekeepers Association S.E. Regional vice president), Joyce Troyer (MCBA secretary), and Jerry Troyer (MCBA director). In the back row, from left, are David Bonham, Scott Venable (MCBA president), Mark Clem, Eddie Lovin, Roger Robinson, Shane Edwards, Trisha Edwards (MCBA treasurer), Scott Russell (MCBA director), and Jamey Sands.

Community buzz

(continued from page 23)

addition to the potential inmate program, the MCBA also plans to create a veteran's outreach component for military vets interested in beekeeping.

"This apiary — and beekeeping in general — has just opened a lot of doors that we didn't anticipate," he says. "Just recently, we met with the USDA, the Monroe County Soil Conservation District, and the Native Pollinator Program to develop a planting plan for the grounds surrounding the apiary, and Fort Loudon Electric Cooperative stepped up to coordinate a generous donation of plants. Over the next several years, much of the site will be planted with trees, shrubs, and flowers that will support not only the bees, but many other pollinating species. We will also install a walking trail that will be a real showcase for Madisonville."

The art department of nearby Sequoyah High School is even getting involved by creating informational signage to be erected at the apiary site.

"They are creating the signage as part of their curriculum," Venable explains. "The art teacher is going to design a draft at the direction of the MCBA, and we hope to get that completed sometime soon. It's just neat how this has turned into such a group effort."



Locally harvested honey was on display at the event, including this jar produced by the hives of MCBA members David and Susan Bonham.



Venable, right, visits with Mark Mills, manager of Ag Central Cooperative's Madisonville store. The Co-op donated various materials to the project and carries a broad spectrum of beekeeping products to support the growing number of apiarists in the Monroe County area.

For more information about the apiary and the Monroe County Beekeepers Association, contact Scott Venable at mctnbuzz@gmail.com or 423-337-1498. Association meetings are free to the public and are held the second Tuesday

of each month at Journey of Faith Church at 442 Old Ballplay Rd. in Madisonville. Visit the apiary and future greenspace at the Monroe County Justice Center located at 4500 New Highway 68 in Madisonville.

Why keep bees?

Although beekeeping is an age-old endeavor, it has seen an uptick in popularity during the COVID crisis. Mark Mills, manager of the Madisonville store of AgCentral Co-operative, says he's not surprised to see the increased interest in beekeeping.

"I think it goes hand-in-hand with the trend toward local foods," Mills says. "People want to know where their food comes from. And when COVID kicked in last year, we saw a huge spike in the sale of garden seed, live plants, and gardening tools, as well as beekeeping supplies. Introducing more people to beekeeping is certainly one of the positives of the pandemic."

Monroe County Beekeeper Association president Scott Venable says that, while it might not seem logical, working with bees is therapeutic for the stresses of 21st century life.

"It's hard to think of that in terms of stinging insects, but it's true," Venable says. "Keeping bees requires you to move slowly and calmly, and just naturally lowers stress. I think that's why you see so many veterans take up beekeeping; it's awesome therapy."

In addition to these personal benefits, keeping a healthy pollinator population is critical to agricultural production. According to The Bee Conservancy, pollinating bees

contribute over \$15 billion to the value of U.S. crop production, particularly in flowering fruits and vegetables. Without them, the U.S. food chain would lose all of its almond production and 90 percent of apples, onions, blueberries, cucumbers, and carrots, in addition to other plant species. Studies show that every third bite of the food Americans eat can be attributed to bee activity.

The loss of bees to colony collapse disorder (CCD), a phenomenon that resulted in the loss of 61 percent of American honey bees between 1947 and 2008, is another reason why cultivating the insects is critical. In addition to fruits and vegetables production, CCD impacts production of clover, hay, and other forage crops, ultimately increasing feed costs for dairy and beef producers.

Venable says these figures illustrate the importance of bolstering honey bee populations across the state and adds that most Tennessee counties have beekeeper associations.

"These creatures need our help to survive and thrive, just as we need them to pollinate our crops," Venable says. "I encourage folks to seek out their local beekeeping club and attend a meeting or two. Every club offers assistance to new beekeepers. Plus, I guarantee you'll make some new friends."

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Tennessee 4-H Governor, Carlin Cochran receives the \$40,400 check from TFC. From left are TFC Event and Sales Support Manager Jimmy Ogilvie, TFC Communications Department Manager Glen Liford, Tennessee 4-H Foundation Executive Director Ryan Hensley, Tennessee 4-H Governor Carlin Cochran, 4-H State Program Leader Justin Crowe, and TFC's former CEO Bart Krisle.

Co-op gives to 4-H

In March, Tennessee 4-H Governor Carlin Cochran of Centerville and 4-H staff came to Tennessee Farmers Cooperative (TFC) headquarters in LaVergne to receive the funds raised from the Co-op Auction Barn virtual auction and the sale of W.R. Case & Sons Cutlery and Co-op's 2020 commemorative 4-H and FFA knife.

The Co-op Auction Barn was held for the fourth consecutive year in 2020, with funds benefiting the state's FFA and 4-H programs. Because of COVID-19, the 2020 auction was hosted on GiveSmart.com, which is an online fundraising platform. The auction had a 156% giving increase thanks to the switch from in-person to online auction style. Between the auction and the funds raised from the annual knife sales, TFC was able to present the 4-H members with a check for \$40,400.

New rabbit requirements

Following detection of rabbit hemorrhagic disease virus type 2 (RHDV2) near the Arkansas border, the Tennessee Department of Agriculture has instituted requirements for the import of live domestic rabbits, wild hares, and pikas to Tennessee.

- No live domestic rabbits, wild hares, pikas, or other susceptible species may enter Tennessee from a premises or area under state or federal quarantine for RHDV2.
- If imported from a state with a confirmed case of RHDV2 within the past eight months, animals must have a certificate of veterinary inspection issued by an accredited veterinarian within 72 hours of entering Tennessee.

RHDV2 can be transmitted through direct contact with infected rabbits or carcasses, meat or fur, feces, bodily fluids, bedding material, feed and water bowls, and hay. The virus can remain in the environment for extended periods, even in extreme temperatures.

Owners should take care to protect their rabbits. Report sudden deaths of domesticated rabbits to the state veterinarian's office. Questions can be directed to 615-837-5120 or animal.health@tn.gov.

Hunters should wear gloves and disinfect equipment and hands after field dressing wild rabbits. Meat from healthy animals is safe to eat if dressed and cooked properly. Dead wild rabbits should be reported to your Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency regional office. Contact information can be found online at www.tn.gov/twra/contact-us.html.

For a current map of RHDV2 outbreaks, visit www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/maps/animal-health/rhd.



Megan Harris, UT Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources agent in Wayne County, was excited to get knee-deep in a grain bin to learn about the rescue and recovery process with (left to right) training coordinator Brian Robinson; Ken Pate, Wayne County First Responder; Richard Williams, Wayne County First Responder; and Nathan Duren, Wayne County Row Crop Producer.

Safety first

New training program focuses on grain bin accident prevention and rescue strategies

Story by Allison Farley
Photos by Hannah Nave Lewis

Agriculture ranks among the most dangerous professions in the United States with a high rate of serious injuries and fatalities. To bring awareness to these risks, the University of Tennessee (UT) Extension Service, Tennessee AgrAbility, and Tennessee Association of Rescue Squads (TARS) joined together to help farmers and first responders focus on prevention and rescue strategies with Grain Bin Safety Awareness and Rescue Training events.

In March of 2020, the first training session was conducted in Carroll County with the

help of Carroll County UT Extension staff and Tennessee AgrAbility, a UT Extension program that educates and assists farmers and farm workers with disabilities.

“After the success of the Carroll County event, which took place just before COVID-19 hit, a group of agents felt like there was a need for this kind of training in our community,” says Megan Harris, UT Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources agent in Wayne County.

Over March 12-13, 2021, UT Extension personnel, TARS members, and AgrAbility staff conducted the largest Grain Bin Safety Awareness and Rescue event yet, with participants from Lawrence, Wayne, Giles, Hickman, Maury, Marshall, and Perry counties. Firefighters,

emergency management agency, farmers, and rescue squad members learned and practiced the techniques of grain bin rescue during the two-day training, and returned home with supplies for their county.

“As part of the training, every participating county received multiple grain rescue tubes, including the Great Wall of Rescue,” says Harris. “The equipment is strategically placed within the county to ensure fast response times. With the knowledge, equipment, and the right placement, this should help to keep the response time to 30 minutes or less for any grain entrapment.”

Brian Robinson, training coordinator with TARS, says the inspiration for the training

program came after a wet corn harvest and multiple grain bin rescues several years ago.

“We had a lot of rain that season, so there was quite a bit of moisture in the corn, which led to an increase in grain bin accidents across the Southeast United States,” says Robinson. “AgrAbility responded by increasing its focus on this critical area of risk.”

During the training, local Extension agents, farmers, and emergency response personnel were taught how to rescue someone trapped in a grain bin, and even experienced the trauma first-hand. Participants got “at least knee-deep” in a grain bin to learn about the rescue and recovery process.

“I can tell you from experience, it’s scary,” says Harris, who helped organize the trainings. “If you slip in, it’s almost like quicksand — you can’t move. I certainly have a better understanding now of how these accidents happen.”

Robinson says the human instinct of panic usually makes a grain-bin accident worse.

“Teaching that prevention is the first priority can make this whole program a success,” he says. “Our second focus is helping participants understand the physics and techniques that go on in a grain rescue to help eliminate that panic response.”

Joetta White, AgrAbility area specialist, says the organization was an active sponsor in creating and hosting the event because the sessions fit so well with AgrAbility’s goals.

“Part of our mission is to enhance and protect the quality of life and preserve liveli-



Participants like Perry County UT Extension County Director Amanda Mathenia experienced first-hand what it is like to use and to be rescued using a sleeve device with the trade name Turtle Tube, which is designed to work quickly to rescue someone in a grain entrapment scenario.

hoods for farm families touched by physical tragedy,” White says. “We want to make everyone aware of the potential dangers on the farm and help farmers learn what equipment they need, work alongside rescue personnel, and have a rescue instead of a fatality.”

Stacy Large, a TARS volunteer and Jefferson Farmers Co-op member, adds that while grain-bin emergencies are “odd-ball things that may only happen once in a year,” they should be taken seriously.

“Sometimes, it’s late in the day when a family figures out that someone is missing, and they were last seen at a grain bin,” he says. “This training should help both farmers and first-responders know what to do and how to be prepared for such an accident.”

To learn more about this program and to find a Grain Awareness and Rescue Training event near you, contact your local UT Extension office.



LEFT: After being trained on how to react when facing a grain entrapment situation, every participating county received a kit containing all the necessary equipment for grain-bin rescues including state-of-the-art equipment like the Great Wall of Rescue, which consists of lightweight wall sections that are easily maneuvered depending on the rescue situation. RIGHT: The training brought together not only emergency response personnel but also local Extension agents and farmers so that everyone can be prepared to help when the call comes.



Just like providing adequate water and nutrients, weed control is a critical component to achieving a healthy, high-yielding soybean crop.

COOPERATOR

Soybean strategies

A careful approach to herbicides and adjuvants is required to achieve high yields

By Mark E. Johnson

Every row crop farmer knows that controlling weeds is one of the primary tasks in producing a high-yielding crop. It ranks right up there with providing enough water and soil nutrients.

With the mind-blowing introduction of Roundup Ready® (RR)-traited crops in the late 1990s, the process of keeping weeds at bay seemed almost magical — simply spray glyphosate over the top without fear of damaging the genetically impervious soybean or corn plant.

But over time, farmers began noticing weeds developing a tolerance to glyphosate — comparable to humans developing toler-

ances to antibiotics — and new strategies became the order of the day. Today, these best practices include using a combination of products that address tolerances to glyphosate, dicamba, and glufosinate, as well as the proper adjuvants for each.

An adjuvant is a non-herbicide or pesticide product added to the tank mix to enhance the spray solution characteristics, like spreading, penetration, or droplet size.

Winfield United Agronomy Manager Darrin Holder says using these chemistries — along with a proper herbicide application routine — will go a long way toward achieving high-yielding soybeans.

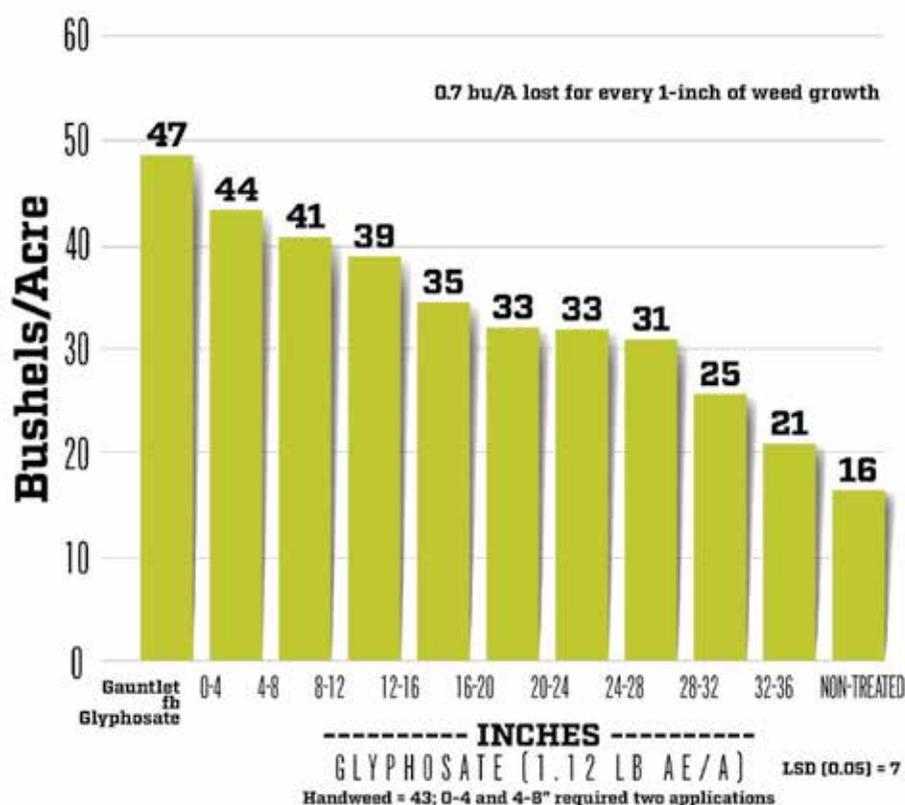
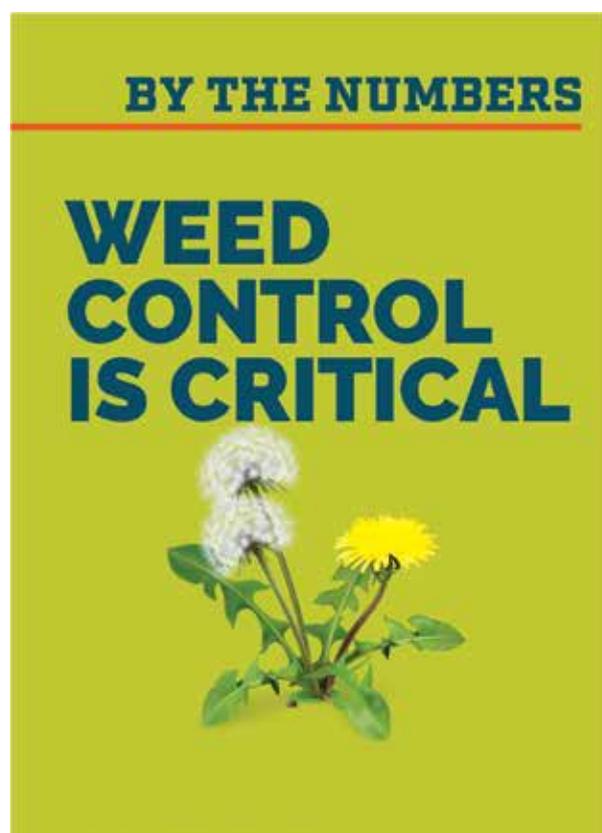
“For the best possible yield, it’s critical to use both pre- and post-emergent applications,” says Holder. “The bottom line is

to start clean and prevent weeds from ever emerging. This helps in two ways. First, it doesn’t put all the pressure on the post [emergent] chemistry to control all the weeds. The pre [emergent] chemistry is going to keep those plants from emerging. Second, it gives us maximum yield potential. There are numerous data sets that show the longer you wait to control weeds, the more yield you will lose.”

Holder says a study by Purdue University weed sciences professor Dr. Brian Young, then at Southern Illinois University, illustrates this weed/yield correlation in stark terms.

“In Dr. Young’s study, he started [his test plot] clean, laid out a pre-emergent

(See Soybean strategies, page 30)



Soybean strategies

(continued from page 29)

followed by glyphosate post, kept it weed-free, and got a 47-bushel yield,” Holder explains. “And then, he allowed weeds to grow. For every inch of weed growth, he lost seven-tenths of a bushel in yield. Let’s say that current market price is \$12 a bushel. That’s \$8.40 an acre we are losing for every inch of weed growth.”

Holder recommends a two-fold plan for keeping weeds at bay without relying on any one chemistry to handle the job.

“First, use multiple modes of action through residuals to help control your weed spectrum,” he says. “A good pre-emergent application with a strong residual component will likely remain active in the soil for several weeks, which will remove some of the pressure on the post application. Second, when you use these traited crops, use the best adjuvants possible.”

If a farmer is using the Enlist® system — either with glyphosate or glufosinate — Holder recommends Class Act NG® adjuvant as a water conditioner/activator and InterLock adjuvant to manage driftable fines and better target the spray application.

“For tough-to-control weeds, I suggest adding some Superb HC® or Destiny HC® [adjuvants] in there as well, because 2,4-D tends to respond to a little bit of oil in those tank mixes,” Holder says.

With the Xtend® and XtendFlex® systems — if the farmer is using dicamba chemistries like XtendiMax®, Stadium®, or Engenia®, plus K salt glyphosate, which is a requirement on the label in 2021— Holder recommends Class Act Ridion® adjuvant as a water conditioner/activator for glyphosate.

“It’s mandatory for most tank mixes with dicamba to use a drift reduction aid (DRA), and I would use OnTarget® at 0.5 percent volume-to-volume,” Holder explains. “That will provide improved deposition and superior drift control through the nozzles that are approved with those chemistries. Then, use InterLock® at two fluid ounces to

help fine-tune the droplet size, which will improve drift by another 50 percent.”

Another requirement for 2021 is the use of a volatility reduction agent, or (VRA), in tank mixes.

“Both the DRA and VRA are EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) requirements this year, so they have to be in there,” Holder points out. “They are essentially the cost of using the technology. Our preferred VRA is Volt-Edge® adjuvant, which is developed specifically for dicamba applications.”

Holder stresses that the end goal of both methods — either the Xtend® or Enlist® systems — is a higher yield and, ultimately, more profit.

“The best way to get the most bang out of both of them is to also lap your residuals, use residual chemistry, and not be solely reliant on the post activity of those products,” he says. “The quicker and earlier you control weeds, the more yield you will have.”

To learn more about the Xtend® and Enlist® soybean systems, contact your local Co-op or GreenPoint Ag agronomist.



Recent studies show that every inch of weed growth results in a seven-tenths loss of yield per bushel. At a market price of \$12, that is a loss of \$8.40 per acre. For this reason among others, experts stress that controlling weeds with a combination of pre- and post-emergent herbicides along with effective adjuvants and residuals will improve yields.

Traveling Tennessee 4-H Camp

Junior 4-H Camp is a highlight for children involved in the popular youth organization. What would normally be a five-day resident camp at one of the three 4-H Centers (Columbia, Crossville, and Greeneville) looks different this year. In a continuation of the program's COVID-19 prevention protocols for 4-H members, staff, and agents, 4-H Camp is hitting the road and will be coming to local University of Tennessee (UT) Extension Offices.

In place of the normal camp experience, 4-H camp staff will be staging local day camp activities for 4-H members in collaboration with county 4-H programs throughout the state. The day camps will begin at 9:00 a.m. and run until 3:30 p.m. Activities include camp essentials like tie-dyeing, crafts, health rocks, environmental education, and more. 4-H Center leaders are also bringing some of the recreation activities that are a staple of camp such as Ga-Ga, archery, cornhole, axe-throwing, and 4-square.

Participating 4-Hers will receive a t-shirt sponsored by Tennessee Farmers Cooperative. If you are interested in sending a student to a 4-H Summer Day Camp, contact your local UT Extension Office or 4-H agent.



Traveling 4-H day camps feature many popular activities normally associated with the traditional camp experience. The format helps to minimize the risk of COVID-19 transmissions.

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History In Focus



The Historic Sam Davis Home and Plantation in Smyrna is one of the top cultural and historic attractions in Tennessee. Sam Davis, the “Boy Hero of the Confederacy,” grew up in the house until joining the Civil War in April of 1861 as a member of “Coleman’s Scouts.” He was later captured by Union troops, refused to share critical information, and was thus sentenced to death. His final words are recorded as: “I would rather die a thousand deaths than betray a friend.”

The Sam Davis Home is now a museum that honors his life and bravery in the war. The home was built in 1810 by Moses Ridley and renovated in 1850 by Sam’s father, Charles Davis. The character of the home remains true to the time when Sam lived there and contains over 100 original belongings of the Davis family. The site is open year-round from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on every day except Sunday. — **Photo by Cara Moore**



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Bring on the
Biscuits

There is no denying that the South has mastered the art of the biscuit, and our Cooperator readers have proved it. Celebrate National Biscuit Day on May 29 with a warm, soft, fluffy biscuit from any one of these delicious recipe submissions.



The Best Biscuits

Teresa Vinson

Union City
Obion Farmers Co-op

- 2 cups self-rising flour
- 1/8 tsp. baking soda
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 2 tbsp. sugar
- 1 cup whole buttermilk
- 4 tbsp. Crisco
- 2 tbsp. melted butter

Mix flour, baking soda, salt, and sugar. Cut Crisco in small pieces and use a pastry cutter or two knives to mix the Crisco into the flour mixture until it forms small pieces. Add buttermilk and mix with a fork until dough forms a ball. Place dough on a piece of floured parchment paper and pat to 3/4-inch disc. Cut out with a biscuit cutter and place in a skillet that has been greased with Crisco. Brush the melted butter on top of the biscuits and bake at 425° for 10-12 minutes or until slightly brown on top.

Easy Cheese and Garlic Biscuits

Villa Maxwell

Hilham
Ag1 Farmers Co-op

- 2 cups Bisquick mix
- 2/3 cup milk
- 1/2 cup shredded cheddar cheese
- 1/4 cup butter, melted
- 1/4 tsp. garlic powder

Mix all ingredients together in a bowl. Drop dough by spoon-

fuls onto greased cookie sheet. Bake at 425° for 8-10 minutes or until golden brown.

7-Up Biscuits

Peggy Bryan

Hillsboro
Coffee Farmers Co-op

- 2 cups Bisquick mix
- 1/2 cup sour cream
- 1/2 cup 7-Up soda
- 1/4 cup butter

Cut the butter into your Bisquick, add the sour cream and 7-Up, then mix. Mix until the dough becomes soft then turn out on your biscuit board. Add a little more flour if needed. Pat the dough out and cut out your biscuits. Put them in a sprayed pan for the oven. Bake at 400° for 20 minutes.

Low-Carb/ Keto Biscuits

Tammie Lewis

Gates
GreenPoint Ag, Halls

- 4 tbsp. vital wheat gluten
- 1/4 cup almond flour
- 4 tbsp. butter
- 2 tbsp. oat fiber
- 1 tbsp. coconut flour
- 1/4 tsp. baking powder
- 1/4 tsp. xanthan gum
- 1/8 tsp. salt
- 1/3 cup + 1 tbsp. cold water

Add all dry ingredients into food processor and grind until fine powder. Add butter to mixture in processor and pulse a few times. Transfer mixture to a bowl and add cold water. Mix with a

spoon until a rough dough forms. Press into ball and refrigerate for 30 minutes. Unwrap and roll out between two sheets of parchment paper to desired thickness. Note: they do not rise much in the oven, so layer the dough to your desired thickness before baking. Cut out biscuits and bake in a preheated 400° oven for 15 minutes or until golden brown.

Yeast Refrigerator Biscuits

Jo Ann Hughes

Tompkinsville, Ky.
Macon Trousdale Farmers Co-op

- 5 cups unsifted flour
- 3 tsp. baking powder
- 1 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1 pkg. dry yeast
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 3/4 cup shortening
- 2 tbsp. lukewarm water
- 2 cups buttermilk
- Melted butter

Dissolve yeast in lukewarm water and let stand for 5-10 minutes. Sift dry ingredients together. Cut in shortening. Add 1 cup of buttermilk to flour mixture and mix well. Add yeast and remaining buttermilk, mixing thoroughly. Knead dough on a floured board. Store in air-tight container in the refrigerator. Take out the amount of dough needed and roll to 1/4 inch thickness. Cut biscuits into desired size. Dip in melted butter and bake in 425° oven for 15 minutes or until golden. Note: this dough does not need

to rise before baking and will keep quite well in the refrigerator for several days.

Low-Sodium Biscuits

Joan Morton

Wartrace
Coffee Farmers Co-op

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 4 tsp. Hain Featherweight Sodium-Free Baking Powder
- 2 tsp. sugar
- 1/2 tsp. cream of tartar
- 1/2 cup unsalted butter
- 1 cup skim milk

Stir together all dry ingredients and cut in butter until the mixture is coarse and crumbly. Add milk and stir until just mixed, then knead the dough gently on a floured surface. Press or roll out to 1/2-inch thickness. Cut out individual biscuits with a 2 1/2-inch cutter. Transfer to ungreased baking sheet and bake at 450° until golden brown for 10-12 minutes. You can also cook the biscuits for 10 minutes and then turn on the broil element for 2-3 minutes to get the level of browning desired. This will make 16 biscuits.

After leftover biscuits cool, they can be frozen for later use. To prepare frozen biscuits, place on microwaveable plate, cover with a paper towel, and thaw in the microwave. Wrap thawed biscuits in aluminum foil and reheat in oven for 10 minutes at 350°.

Children's Favorites in August

In August, we are looking for recipes that will squash your kids' urges to feed their dinners to the dog. Kids are unpredictable, and getting picky eaters to chow down on dinner can be a challenge. But when you find the right recipe, it'll be a little bit easier.

Help your fellow Cooperator readers satisfy even the pickiest eaters by submitting your favorite children's recipes. The person submitting the recipe judged best will be named "Cook of the Month" for the August issue of **The Cooperator** and receive \$10.

Others sending in recipes chosen for publication will receive \$5, and each winner will also receive a special "What's Cookin'?" certificate.

Monday, July 5, is the deadline for your children's favorites recipes.

Only recipes with complete, easy-to-follow instructions will be considered. Send entries to: Recipes, **The Cooperator**, P.O. Box 3003, LaVergne, TN 37086, or email them to afarley@ourcoop.com. Include your name, address, telephone number, and the Co-op with which you do business. Recipes that are selected will also be published on our website at www.ourcoop.com.

Our Country Churches



305th in a series to show where our rural Co-op friends worship

Chapel Hill Baptist Church in Henderson County

Chapel Hill Baptist Church of Lexington, Tenn., is active in the Garnertown community of southwest Henderson County. In March of 2021, the church welcomed a new pastor, Brother John Burroughs, to lead the small body of believers each week. Join them in person or virtually through their Facebook page every Sunday at 9:45 a.m. for Sunday School and 11:00 a.m. for Worship. The church also invites visitors to join them for breakfast at 8:45 a.m. on the first Sunday of every month for a time of fellowship.

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Land of opportunity

The Van Nes family makes dramatic change to pursue an American dream

Story and photos by Hannah Nave Lewis

British basketball doesn't usually have much to do with American agriculture. Except, that is, in the case of the Van Nes family of Luray, Tenn., and formerly of Southern England.

In 2009, brothers Vince and Lucas Van Nes, 6'11" and 6'10", respectively, left their family farm in Dorchester, England, to pursue their own hoop dreams in America. They both enrolled at Northfield Mount Hermon School (NMH), a coeducational prep school in Gill, Mass., that is known for both its basketball program and high percentage of international students. In the process, the young men fell in love with America.

"They were so excited about the U.S. and all the opportunities it offered," recalls their father, Frank. "After much urging from the boys, my wife, Miriam, and I, along with our two younger children, Franklin and Naomi, visited a couple of times. We all got to see some of America and — just like Vince and Lucas — we loved it."

After stellar careers at NMH, Vince and Lucas moved on to college-level basketball in Connecticut — Vince, at Fairfield University, and Lucas, at Southern Connecticut State University. After a couple of seasons there, Lucas' ambitions shifted away from athletics and he entered medical school, earning his degree from East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania. At Fairfield, Vince's basketball dream abruptly ended with a foot injury.

Exit basketball, enter agriculture.

After graduating from Fairfield, Vince took a part-time job harvesting grain for farmers from Texas to North Dakota and rekindled an interest in agriculture— this time, in America.

"I told my dad that I wanted to be involved in farming again," says Vince. "He was surprised that I meant in America, not England. And I wanted him and the rest of our family to move over here, too."

Vince's passion for agriculture came as no surprise, as the Van Nes family has a long history in farming. Frank was raised on a small dairy farm in the Netherlands, and his family later moved to southern England where they raised crops and operated a dairy and a bed and breakfast.

"With such an established history of farming in England, it was quite a shock when Vince suggested we all move to the U.S.," says Frank. "It would be a leap of faith. After time and much prayer, we decided to sell our farm in England and go for it."

Then came a period of exploration as the family scouted potential American locations to establish a new farm. Frank and Vince narrowed the search to the Southeast, looking at property throughout Kentucky and Tennessee, before settling on the 2,000-acre rowcrop farm they now operate in Luray.

The entire Van Nes family now resides in the U.S. Vince and his wife, Makenzie, live on the farm and help run the operation. Lucas and his wife, Nicole — a soon-to-be nurse practitioner — live in New Jersey. Franklin is a senior software engineer and lives in Boston with his wife, Sara, and 6'6" daughter Naomi is still in college and just finished her own basketball career with Mercer University in Georgia.

"As you can imagine, this was a huge adjustment for all of us," says Frank. "But we've made it work. Farming here is different. In Europe, we didn't have genetically modified crops at all, so we couldn't spray Roundup or dicamba on any of our crops. And the [Europeans] generally do a lot of tillage before they plant a crop. They plow down to eight inches and then run a tillage tool over it once or twice before planting."

Having adopted the local no-till practices, Frank and Vince both agree that they enjoy producing crops in an environmentally friendly way. The family spreads soybeans, corn, and winter wheat over their 2,000 rural Henderson, Chester, and Madison County acres. They enjoy working to improve their production with irrigation, cover crops, and yield-mapping, in addition to no-till.

"Air, soil, and water are the three main areas where we're concerned," says Frank. "We do our best to maintain all three in good order."

The Van Neses are members and customers of First Farmers Cooperative and say the Co-op folks were some of their first farming friends in the U.S. The Henderson store was one of their first stops after signing papers on the land.

"We were looking for retailers to work with and help us with our fertilizer, chemicals, and seed," says Vince. "First Farmers Co-op was really the first one we came to. We met with Mike Clayton and Matt Hearn. They were just really friendly, and got us set up with an account, and all sorted out."

Vince adds that the future of the farm is a hot topic around the family dinner table. For now, the Van Nes family wants to focus on improving their efficiency and productivity before adding any more acreage.

"Technology changes every year," says Vince. "We try to stay on top of that and keep ourselves efficient to improve what we already have."



Faith, family, farming, and basketball are the backbones of the Van Nes family. From left are Vince, Miriam, Frank, Franklin, Naomi, and Lucas holding the family's dog.



From left are Vince, Makenzie, Miriam, and Frank Van Nes.

“I think we have a duty as caretakers of creation and the land. We do our best to give both the best care possible.” – Frank Van Nes

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