

# THE COOPERATOR

DECEMBER 2021

CONNECTING THE **CO-OP** COMMUNITY



## Another good year in the books

**PAGE 6** Three Tennessee farms are flourishing thanks to hard work, family input, and local Co-ops.

CONNECT WITH US



**CO-OP**

ourcoop.com

### WHAT'S INSIDE

**PAGE 5** Elsea takes reins of Faithway Alliance

**PAGE 16** AccuField® offers options for managing inputs

**PAGE 18** Fentress nursery offers poinsettias for the holidays

WINTER SUPPLEMENTATION

# DON'T PUT A FREEZE ON YOUR PROFITS

The winter season plays havoc on pastures and forages. Be sure your herd is equipped to endure those long winter months with the proper nutrition and supplementation products from your local Co-op.



SEE YOUR  
LOCAL  
CO-OP



CUSTOMER SERVICE  
EXPERTISE  
& KNOW-HOW



**CO-OP**

**FEEDS**

[ourcoop.com/livestock](http://ourcoop.com/livestock)





22 PAGE



PAGE 6



PAGE 18

# THE COOPERATOR

DECEMBER 2021

CONNECTING THE CO-OP COMMUNITY



PAGE 6

5

## New CEO named for Faithway Alliance

Elsa takes reigns of joint venture company.

6

## Another good year in the books

Three Tennessee farms are flourishing thanks to hard work, family input, and local Co-ops.

16

## AccuField® advantage

Precision ag provides option for managing fertilizer applications.

18

## From seed to store

Fentress County's Wolf River Valley Growers has provided Tennessee with large varieties of annuals and perennial ornamentals like poinsettias since 1982.

22

## Maker's mark

Bladesmith combines art and functionality in his creations

4/Snapshots  
Collaborating for a cause.

12/Featured Products  
Learn about six products the Co-op has to offer.

15/Neighborly Advice  
Feeding broodmares and foals.

27/What's Cookin'?  
Cocoa all the way.

30/Every Farmer Has A Story  
David and Dawn Gray's Christmas tree farm has become a holiday tradition for many families.

IN EVERY ISSUE

## THE COOPERATOR

December 2021 Volume 62, Number 10

Published by Tennessee Farmers Cooperative in the interest of better farming through cooperation and improved technology, and to connect the Co-op community through shared experiences, common values, and rural heritage.

**Editor: Glen Liford**

gliford@ourcoop.com

**Assistant Editor: Claire Hill**

chill@ourcoop.com

**Content Coordinator: Allison Farley**

afarley@ourcoop.com

**Senior Graphic Designer: Shane Read**

sread@ourcoop.com

**Layout & Production Coordinator:**

**Travis Merriman**

tmerriman@ourcoop.com

**Editorial Assistant: Polly Campbell**

pcampbell@ourcoop.com

**Advertising Information: Jimmy Ogilvie**

615-793-8453, jogilvie@ourcoop.com

*The Cooperator* is distributed free to patrons of member Co-ops. Since each Co-op maintains its own mailing list, requests for subscriptions must be made through the local Co-op. When reporting an address change, please include the mailing label from a past issue and send to the following address:

**The Cooperator**  
P.O. Box 3003  
LaVergne, TN 37086  
Phone: (615) 793-8339  
E-mail: [tlewter@ourcoop.com](mailto:tlewter@ourcoop.com)

### Guest Subscriptions:

Guest subscriptions are available for \$12.95 per year by sending a check or money order to Tennessee Farmers Cooperative at the above address.

**TFC's website:** [www.ourcoop.com](http://www.ourcoop.com)

### Follow our social media sites:

-  [www.facebook.com/TennesseeFarmersCooperative](http://www.facebook.com/TennesseeFarmersCooperative)
-  [www.twitter.com/TNFarmers](http://www.twitter.com/TNFarmers)
-  [www.instagram.com/tennesseefarmerscooperative](http://www.instagram.com/tennesseefarmerscooperative)
-  [www.youtube.com/TnFarmersCooperative](http://www.youtube.com/TnFarmersCooperative)

### TFC Board of Directors:

Chairman — Mark Thompson,  
Cumberland Gap, Zone 3  
Vice Chairman — Keith Fowler,  
Martin, Zone 1  
Amos Huey, Kenton, Zone 1  
Tim Luckey, Humboldt, Zone 1  
Benjie Daniel, Charlotte, Zone 2  
Donald Jernigan, Christiana, Zone 2  
Stephen Philpott, Shelbyville, Zone 2  
David Sarten, Sevierville, Zone 3  
George Smartt, McMinnville, Zone 3  
Chief Executive Officer — Shannon Huff

NOTICE: This publication is for informational purposes only. Tennessee Farmers Cooperative, its affiliates, subsidiaries, and member Co-ops are not responsible for any damages or claims that may result from a reader's use of this information, including but not limited to actual, punitive, consequential, or economic damages. Tennessee Farmers Cooperative makes no warranties or representations, either express or implied, including warranties of merchantability or fitness of any product/material for a particular purpose. Each article, document, advertisement, or other information is provided "AS IS" and without warranty of any kind. Tennessee Farmers Cooperative reserves the right to alter, correct, or otherwise change any part or portion of this publication, including articles and advertisements, without detriment to Tennessee Farmers Cooperative, its affiliates, subsidiaries, or member cooperatives. Unless otherwise noted, stock images courtesy of gettyimages.com.

# Collaborating for a cause

## Shooting Hunger adds East Tennessee event to battle food insecurity



**Glen Liford**

Editor

**T**his past October, an event popped up on my calendar that made me smile: Shooting Hunger. It's something I look forward to covering every year.

Shooting Hunger was formed in 2015 by the Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation and Farm Credit Mid America, and during the program's first year, it raised enough funds to provide more than 88,000 meals for hungry Tennesseans. Tennessee Farmers Co-op joined the effort the following year, and soon, the program was adopted by individuals and organizations from every corner of the agriculture industry. Organizers report more than 2 million meals have been raised since its inception.

This year, the Shooting Hunger team added its first event in East Tennessee, held October 28 at the Crossville Shooting Sports Park in Cumberland County. Even though rain was forecasted, more than 50 teams of sporting clay enthusiasts braved the weather to support the cause and enjoy a day of fun and fellowship. The morning flight enjoyed almost perfect weather, but showers did dampen the afternoon activities.

The East Tennessee event was the third and final of the Shooting Hunger schedule for 2021. Events were also held in West Tennessee at the Carroll County Shooting Sports Park on June 25 and in Middle Tennessee at the Nashville Gun Club on September 9.

Honestly, these events are a bit like family reunions. As one of the designated photographers, I get to visit, at least briefly, with each team that comes through the course. It's great to see

faces and share a few moments with these folks. It's an assignment I really enjoy.

One of my TFC friends and coworkers — Event and sales support manager, Jimmy Ogilvie — was one of the many familiar faces on hand for the event.

"Co-op is proud to support Shooting Hunger and try to help our neighbors in need," said Jimmy. "Many of our local Co-ops provide support as well. And we all enjoy pulling together to stage these events."

And the work is important.

"It's hard to believe one in five Tennesseans live in a home where there is food insecurity, meaning the family may not have enough resources to provide reliable access to food and may miss meals," Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation Director of Communications Lee Maddox told the group. "One in four Tennessean children live in those conditions. This event helps us to meet our goal for 2021 of providing more than 100,000 backpack meals for Tennessee children."

Proceeds from the event will be shared with local food banks and distributed across the state. Especially during the holidays, the resources become stretched. As always, we encourage you to donate to your local food banks whenever possible and help out your Tennessee neighbors.



One of the Tennessee Farmers Cooperative-CFS Teams competing at the October 28 event at the Crossville Shooting Sports Park in Cumberland County, included, from left, Randy Stubblefield, United Farm & Home chief executive officer, Alan Jackson, United Farm & Home senior project manager, Sean Cooper, CFS area finance manager, and Lucas Trail, EFC Systems Administrator.

# Elsea named CEO of Faithway Alliance

**A**fter an extensive national search led by the firm KornFerry, Mike Elsea has been selected as Faithway Alliance's new chief executive officer, effective immediately.

Faithway Alliance, a joint venture between Tennessee Farmers Cooperative (TFC), Alabama Farmers Cooperative (AFC), Alliance Farm and Ranch, and Faithway Feeds, provides farm and rural lifestyle products to member Co-ops in the Tennessee and Alabama cooperative systems and some other retail businesses. The company was established Aug. 1, 2020.

Mike is a Nashville native and brings more than 25 years of experience in operations, sales, logistics, marketing, and merchandising in retail, wholesale, and distribution industries to his role as CEO.

He most recently served as division vice president of BMC, an Atlanta-based company that is one of the nation's leading providers of diversified building materials and construction services. His responsibility included sales, operations, manufacturing, installs, and mergers and acquisitions activity for the division producing more than \$600 million in revenue. His territory included eight states from South Carolina to New Jersey with 22 locations and more than 1,200 employees.

Prior to BMC, he served in a number of roles before becoming area vice president for ProBuild/BFS, a \$6 billion manufacturer and distributor of building materials. He has also worked for Jasper Lumber and Components, Georgia-Pacific/Blue Linx, Marvin's Home Centers, and Moore-Handley.

Mike is a graduate of the University of Montevallo. He and his wife, Liz-Anne, have been married 26 years and have three children — Emily, 24; Cam, 21, a junior at Auburn; and Jack, 18, a high school senior. In his spare time, Mike enjoys running, golf, and is active in his church, Hillside United Methodist Church.

"I'm very excited to be joining the Faithway Alliance team," says Mike. "I'm looking forward to growing our future together and providing value for our Co-op members through innovation, responsiveness, and integrity."



FAITHWAY  
ALLIANCE  
FARM & RANCH



# Another good year in the books

Three Tennessee farms are flourishing thanks to hard work, family input, and local Co-ops

Story by Claire Hill

Photos by Claire Hill and Glen Liford

Despite the obvious challenges of the past two years, the 2021 harvest season has been a good one. Farm, family, and Co-op seem to be the formula for perennial success, as evidenced by these three operations from Tennessee's Grand Divisions.



## Rusty and Jeff Harris – West Tennessee

Harvest time in Tennessee typically falls in mid to late October, and the exact time of harvesting the different crops depends on the weather, and, with cotton, the moisture content in the air.

"I look forward to the harvest season every year, but cotton has a special place in my heart," says rowcrop farmer Rusty Harris. "The southern history, the white backdrop, and the unique smell of the cotton harvest are just a few of my favorite things."

Rusty and his fraternal twin brother, Jeff, grow cotton on 1,800 acres in Chester, Madison, McNairy, and Henderson counties. Rusty has been farming full time for 16 years and his brother, Jeff, for nine.

When Rusty and Jeff's father, Richard, passed away in 2006, the brothers stepped in to continue working the family farm. With help from their uncle, Billy Wayne Harris, and other local farmers, the Harrises were able to keep the farm productive without skipping a beat.

"I wanted my kids to grow up on the farm the way Rusty and I did," says Jeff. "Our kids are very involved with farm life, and it's such a blessing."

Rusty and his wife, Brandi, have three daughters, Hannah, 11; Haley, 3; and Heidi, 2. Jeff and his wife, Chastity, have two kids, Levi, 9 and Charlie, 7.

"We rely heavily on our faith and with the support of our local Co-op, it helps us maximize the potential harvest," says Rusty.

The Harris brothers are First Farmers Co-op members and purchase all their crop inputs from the Co-op.

"We love working with the First Farmers Co-op team and trust them immensely," says Jeff. "They are like a part of our family. [First Farmers Agronomist] Ryan Zawacki stopped by on our first day of cotton picking just to see how it was going and if he could help in any way. That's just an example of how the folks at Co-op truly care about our farming operation and want us to be successful."



## Tim and Craig Byrd – Middle Tennessee

Tim and Craig Byrd, members of both Perry Farmers Co-op and United Farm and Home Co-op, have been farming full time for 11 years in Perry and Wayne counties. The brothers raise corn, soybeans, and cattle on 1,500 acres.

"The opportunity that farming provides excites me," says Craig. "When it's time to turn in each night, I can feel good that I've done a full day's work; that's rewarding in itself."

Knowing that they both wanted a career in agriculture, the brothers both pursued agribusiness degrees — Craig, at Freed Hardeman University, and Tim, at both Freed Hardeman and the University of Tennessee at Martin.

(See Another good year in the books, page 8)



OPPOSITE PAGE: Rusty Harris picks cotton on his farm in Chester County as a plane plants cover crop seed such as turnips and clover. The Harris brothers are First Farmers Co-op members and farm 1,800 acres of cotton in four counties. ABOVE: First Farmers Cooperative Digital Technology Manager JT Demar, left, visits with Rusty, center, and Jeff on their first day of picking. The Harrises purchase a variety of agronomy products through First Farmers and credit the Co-op for the farm's continued growth.

# Another good year in the books

(continued from page 7)



**United Home and Farm Co-op and Perry Farmers Co-op members Craig Byrd, left, and his brother, Tim, farm 1,500 acres in Perry and Wayne counties. The Byrds grow corn and soybeans, and also provide soybean seed for Tennessee Farmers Cooperative joint venture GreenPoint Ag.**

The Byrds purchase their fertilizer, seed, spray, and crop protection — as well as soil-sampling services — from both Co-ops.

“The Co-op staff is knowledgeable and provides amazing expertise in agronomy,” says Tim. “They know us well, and we enjoy the family atmosphere that shopping at the Co-op provides.”

The Byrds are unique in the fact that they provide soybean seed for Tennessee Farmers Cooperative joint venture GreenPoint Ag. They also plant Croplan, Agrigold, Dekalb, Asgrow, and Pioneer seed varieties, which they purchase from Co-op.

“Farming full time provides us the flexibility to be outdoors and doing something different every day,” says Tim. “It’s a great feeling to make a living by growing things with your own hands.”

The Byrds usually see yields of around 45 bushels per acre on soybeans and around 180 bushels per acre on corn.



## Mark Thompson – East Tennessee

“When my son, Cody, was seven years old, he wanted to grow pumpkins,” says East Tennessee farmer Mark Thompson. “That first year, one pickup was all we needed to haul them out at harvest time. That was 25 years ago. These days, we are growing on 30 acres,

# Official harvest numbers still being tabulated

In a Nov. 7 report, the USDA National Agriculture Statistic Service (NASS) stated that 94 percent of Tennessee’s grain corn harvest was complete. Only 66 percent of the soybean crop and 54 percent of the cotton harvest was complete.

In the Nov. 9 crop report, corn production for grain yields were expected to average 177 bushels per harvested acre. Soybean production for beans was forecast at 51.2 bushels per harvested acre and cotton was forecast at 880 pounds per harvested acre. The final numbers for 2021 are yet to be tabulat-

ed, however good field crop yields were reported across the state when the Cooperator went to print on Nov. 9.

Less than a month ago, USDA NASS reported that corn production for grain was up slightly from the previous forecast and up 6 percent from 2020. Soybean production for beans was up 2 percent from the previous forecast and up 5 percent from 2020. Cotton production was down 3 percent from the previous forecast but up 23 percent from 2020. For more information visit <https://www.nass.usda.gov>.

and it takes several semi-trucks to haul our pumpkins to market.”

In addition to more than 60 varieties of pumpkins, Thompson also grows tomatoes, beans, peppers, cucumbers, soybeans, and corn on his Cumberland Gap farm, in addition to 300 head of cattle.

“The produce season was dry at the start, but it did finally rain when we needed it throughout the season,” says Thompson, a longtime member of Claiborne Farmers Co-op. “This pumpkin crop is unreal. We would like

to think that our agronomic practices had a lot to do with it, but I know the good Lord gave us rain at the right time.”

Thompson, a first-generation farmer and graduate of the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, serves as chairman for the TFC Board of Directors.

“I think that farming and producing a crop is the closest thing to what God intended for us,” says Thompson. “It’s been a blessing to raise our family and produce crops on the farm.”



In addition to more than 60 varieties of pumpkins, Tennessee Farmers Cooperative Board Chairman Mark Thompson also grows tomatoes, beans, peppers, cucumbers, soybeans, and corn on his Claiborne County farm.

# WE ARE THE

**TAEP**  
Farm Investment  
Project

---

Tennessee Agricultural  
Enhancement Program

  
http://www.tn.gov/taep

# SOURCE

**CO-OP**



*Get to us!*



CUSTOMER SERVICE  
EXPERTISE  
& KNOW-HOW

## OUR PREMIER PRODUCT VENDORS



**ARROWQUIP**





# MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM TARTER

IMPROVING LIFE ON YOUR  
LAND SINCE 1945.

ROUND VERSA 23  
GCT21

TARTERUSA.COM  
1.800.346.4486

**TARTER**

**CHRYSLER • DODGE • JEEP • RAM**  
of Columbia



**BUY A RAM**  
THE **CO-OP** WAY.

WE HAVE AN EXCLUSIVE OFFER FOR ALL  
CO-OP MEMBERS TO TAKE HUGE DISCOUNTS  
OF UP TO **\$11,000 OFF MSRP**.

DISCOUNTS AVAILABLE ON MOST CHRYSLER,  
DODGE, JEEP AND RAM VEHICLES.

FREE DELIVERY ANYWHERE IN TENNESSEE!



**CHRYSLER DODGE Jeep RAM**

CALL CRAIG BATON • CO-OP SALES SPECIALIST • (615) 243-1528 • CBATON@CDJRCOLUMBIA.COM

# TPPA Hosts Annual Activities in Cookeville

All Tennessee pork producers who pay into the Pork Checkoff are stakeholders in the Tennessee Pork Producers Association (TPPA) and are encouraged to attend the TPPA Annual Meeting on Thursday, Jan. 13, 2022, in Cookeville.

The TPPA annual meeting and other educational events will take place at the Leslie Town Centre, located at 1 West 1st Street in Cookeville. The Farm Animal Care Coalition of Tennessee (FACCT) will meet from 2:45 to 3:45 p.m., during which time FACCT Executive Director Julie Giles will give an update on the organization's activities. From 3:30 to 4:30 p.m., Dr. Marisa Rotolo from PIC, Inc., Dr. Seth Krantz, DVM of Tosh Farms, and Dr. Alexa McCourt, DVM from the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, will address African Swine Fever and the pork supply chain. Following the presentations, the day wraps up with the Taste of Elegance Chefs' Competition and Bid for Pork Auction at 5:00 p.m.

The TPPA meeting allows time to discuss programs for the coming year and elect committee members and officers



for the TPPA Executive Committee. Pork producers interested in candidacy for the executive committee should contact the TPPA office at 615-274-6533 or email [porkpromotn@tds.net](mailto:porkpromotn@tds.net). As part of the annual TPPA activities, the State Junior Hog

Show will take place Jan. 13 - 14, 2022, at Tennessee Tech's Hyder-Burks Agricultural Pavilion. The State Junior Hog Show continues to grow with more than 340 exhibitors that are expected to be on hand for the show.



## THE RIGHT LOAN LIFTS YOU HIGHER.

When you're ready to expand, you need a lender who thinks big. Take your operation further with real estate loans tailored to your needs.

- Customizable – Our loans are available at fully-fixed rates up to 25 years. We also offer adjustable and variable rate loans.
- Convertible – When interest rates change, convert your existing loans to a lower rate.\*
- Specialized – Every loan is backed by our local team's financial and agricultural expertise.

Visit [E-FARMCREDIT.COM/REAL-ESTATE](http://E-FARMCREDIT.COM/REAL-ESTATE) or call 800-444-FARM to start a conversation.

Subject to credit approval. Additional terms and conditions may apply. Farm Credit Mid-America is an equal opportunity lender.

\*Conversion fees of \$500 may apply. Fees subject to change without notice. There may be additional fees associated with the conversion, such as the wholesale conversion fee.





CO-OP

# Christmas

GIFT IDEAS



## Breyer the Big Dig

The Big Dig® (#1349622) is the original sandbox digger that is great for the backyard, barn, or beach where your construction worker can dig sand, move dirt, or shovel snow. Made of sturdy metal, it features two-handed controls for digging and dumping, a 360-degree boom, a rotating, contoured seat, and a stout, wide base.

## Ertl 75th Anniversary Edition 1:16 Scale Allis Chalmers Tractor

Ertl's 75th Anniversary Edition 1:16 Antique Gold Allis Chalmers (#1056436) Model "WC" Tractor with Farmer replicates the first tractor produced by Fred Ertl in 1945 and was manufactured in 2020 to commemorate Ertl's 75th Anniversary. This tractor features a die cast body and fenders, and only 750 were produced. Embossed in the metal on the side of the tractor are the words, "Ertl 75 Years." Comes in a special commemorative box and base.



### Brybelly Saddle Up Barn and Stable

Brybelly Saddle Up Barn and Stable (#1085715) allows you to saddle up your horses and bring them to this wooden barn and stable with real working doors and a hay lift. This set has everything you need to take care of the horses: hay to eat, fences to play in, and stables to sleep in. It includes two farmers and three horses. The classic design makes a great addition to any play house or barnyard set. It engages the imagination and develops social, emotional, and interpersonal skills through play.



### Pull-Back Derby Racers by Brybelly

Pull-Back Derby Racers by Brybelly (#2402164) are a great way to get kids using their hands for some friendly competition. The set includes "Jack Hammer," the mako shark who can zoom through the ocean; "Avi Airy," the peregrine falcon whose hunting dives reach incredible speeds; and "Will Powers," the fast-sprinting African lion. Little Racers can find out which predator is the fastest. Made from natural wood and water-based safe points, these derby cars are great for racers 3 and up.



### Alpha Block Cargo Truck

The Alpha Block Cargo Truck (#1087046) is two toys in one. First, it's a powerful semi truck. Simply hitch up its trailer to haul a whole bunch of toys such as farm animals, vehicles, and more. Second, play with the colorful wooden alphabet blocks. There's 28 educational blocks in all, featuring an upper-case letter on one side and the corresponding lower-case letter on the other. They're perfect for practicing your ABCs, spelling simple words, and establishing early reading readiness. Match them up, stack them up, and when you're all done, pack them up. The alphabet blocks store easily back in the trailer for quick and simple clean-up. Made with natural wood and painted with a safe water-based paint.



### Schleich Farm World

Schleich Farm World (#423415) comes with animals and accessories. All the animals on the big farm are happy. They have a nice home with lots of space. They are protected from the wind and weather. They are given high-quality feed every day. Every morning, the farmer opens the big doors to let the cows out of their stalls. The farmer has also bought an amazing present for the cows: a massage machine. The cows love getting a massage from the machine. In order to ensure the animals always have enough to eat, the farmer uses the rope winch to lift feed up to the hayloft. He stores it there for cold winter days. There are lots of things to discover, operate, and rebuild on the big farm.

This winter you can...

# COUNT ON US.

## Ford Super Duty® Chassis Cab

We subjected Super Duty to four-post frame twists, gravel, dust, water, salt brine, mud baths and even intentionally tested with worn or broken parts. We're talking here about extreme conditions that often went far beyond what you would likely encounter on your toughest of jobs.



### Free delivery in the state of Tennessee.

Commercial Vehicle Center dealers are specially trained and equipped to sell, service and finance the most complete line of Class 1-7 work trucks.

John Hamby - Fleet Manager  
Give us a call at 1-888-820-3654  
jhamby@fordofmurfreesboro.com



1550 NW Broad St,  
Murfreesboro, TN 37129



**COMMERCIAL  
VEHICLE CENTER**



satisfy their  
**HUNGER!**  
with **QUALITY Behlen Country®**  
feeders approved by **TAEP**



### 10' All Metal Feed Bunk

• 10' long 44" wide 244 LB • TFC #15621 BC #22130101



### V-Bar Feeder

- Will accommodate 2 large round bales
  - A real hay saver
- TFC #15610 BC #26000302



### 10' All Metal Utility Feed Bunk

- 10' long 33" wide 124 LB
  - Long-lasting all-steel construction
- BC #22120101



### Creep Feeder

- All poly hopper
  - Galvanized fence & adjustable cross bar
- TFC #15607 BC #24121768

**CO-OP**

Now available at Tennessee Farmers  
Co-op Stores, ask for Behlen Country®





By Grey Parks, ProTriton Equine Specialist

## Feeding broodmares and foals

**H**orse breeding requires a significant investment of time, effort, and money. To get the best return on your investment, it's important to provide your broodmares and foals with high-quality nutrition. Paying careful attention to your feeding program will ensure that your youngsters get started off on the right hoof!

### Monitor body condition

Your horse's body condition score (BCS) is a simple, easily observed indication of whether she is eating too many, too few, or just the right number of calories. The Henneke Body Condition Scoring scale rates the amount of fat on a horse from 1 to 9, with 1 indicating an emaciated horse and 9 indicating a horse that is extremely fat. Broodmares should ideally be maintained at a BCS of 5-6. This means that the withers, spine, and hip bones should be slightly rounded, and the mare's ribs should be felt but not seen. Growing horses, on the other hand, should be kept slightly thinner, at a BCS of 4-5; the last 2-3 ribs may be just visible. While carrying a bit of extra weight may improve a mare's fertility, too much weight on a growing skeleton may predispose a young horse to developmental orthopedic disorders such as physitis and osteochondrosis.

### Protein: quantity and quality

Broodmares and young horses require protein for building healthy body tissues. When looking at the protein content of your horse's diet, it's important to pay attention to both quantity and quality. The first of these, quantity, is usually fairly easy to meet through providing ample forage (pasture or hay). However, you must ensure that the protein being provided is of sufficient quality, which means that it contains the correct balance of amino acids to support growth. Alfalfa and soybean meal are two common high-quality protein sources used in equine rations. Lysine and methionine are two amino acids that are commonly deficient in equine diets. Feeds designed for breeding and growing animals will be higher in these important nutrients when compared to feeds designed for mature, non-breeding horses.

### Minerals

When you think about minerals needed for growth, calcium and phosphorous probably come to mind immediately. These two minerals are critical for skeletal health, and it is important that they are provided in the correct ratio (2:1 Ca:P) for optimal growth. There are other minerals, however, that are also critical in growing horses. Magnesium, copper, and zinc are also necessary for healthy growth and development. These minerals, particularly copper and zinc, tend to be found at very low levels in forages, so it is important that they are provided in the horse's feed.

### Choosing a Feed

Now that we've discussed some of the nutrients that are important in broodmare and foal diets, you're probably wondering how to supply them. Pinnacle Mare & Foal

(#331CO) is specifically designed to meet the nutrient needs of broodmares and young, growing horses. If you prefer to feed a pelleted product, then Pinnacle 1400 (#321PE) is also an excellent choice. With either of these products, it is important to follow the feeding instructions on the bag to ensure that you are meeting your horse's protein, mineral, and vitamin requirements. What if your mare and/or foal is an easy keeper and can't consume the recommended amount of Pinnacle Mare & Foal or Pinnacle 1400? In that case, Pinnacle Balancer (#336PE) can be fed to meet these requirements while providing fewer calories.

Providing a high-quality and balanced diet is critical for healthy growth and development of your broodmares and foals. Your local Co-op offers a complete line of equine feeds to help you meet these needs. Check with the folks at your local Co-op for further recommendations.



# AccuField<sup>®</sup> advantage

## Precision ag provides option for managing fertilizer applications

From the GreenPoint Ag Technology Team

By Paul Hollis

**F**ertilizer prices continued to soar to record highs as the 2021 fall harvest moved into its latter stages, leaving growers with yet another primary concern as they begin planning for next year.

And while there's not much that can be done from the farm level to slow price increases, there are options for making fertilizer applications more cost efficient.

"The need for precision soil sampling and variable-rate applications has never been greater," says Daniel Mullenix, Senior Manager of Ag Technologies for GreenPoint Ag. "Most of the fertilizer blends we applied last year were in the \$400-per-ton range, but now they're trending in the \$700-per-ton range, and there's no end in sight."

GreenPoint Ag's AccuField — a full-service ag technology and information platform—is a premiere soil fertility tool, and precision agriculture is at its core, Mullenix says.

"Through this platform, we can help a grower through grid sampling their field on a fairly regular basis—in 2½ or 5-acre grids—or through zone sampling their fields using historical yield data or a digital data-driven approach," he says. "This gives us an accurate assessment of what's happening in that field in terms of soil fertility."

Without such precision, a grower may pull one or two composite samples from an entire field, costing them money in the long run.

"By doing that, growers might be basing a fertility recommendation on one or two points in a field," Mullenix says. "Random sampling could very well cost a grower more money at a time when they can least afford it."

When pulling a random sample, it could be from a spot where fertility is high, such as an old dump site for chicken litter, gin trash, or some other soil amendment, he says.

"The residual effect of the nutrient is there, and you could get a sample thinking it is representative of the entire field rather than being skewed due to a historical practice," Mullenix says.

On the flip side, a random sample could come from a spot in the field with historically low nutrient levels.

With AccuField, grid sampling or zone sampling can be used based on available yield data or field performance, Mullenix says. This allows a grower to know exactly what is happening in a field from a soil fertility standpoint.

"You can spend money more wisely as you variably apply nutrients across a field to maintain fertility, maximize yield potential, or to stick to a budget," he says. "Considering the cost of fertilizer this year, more growers probably will be looking at budgeting. We can help growers assess what is in their soil bank from an agronomic standpoint and what they need to do to be mindful of their budget for the coming year."

AccuField allows for custom recommendations and fertility plans and can incorporate any recommendations from commercial and public testing labs throughout the southeastern U.S., Mullenix says.

"If a grower likes a certain aspect of what a specific lab recommends, we can customize their soil fertility plan to include that."

Mullenix recommends soil sampling as early as possible, depending on the crop situation.

"That means as soon as the crops come off," he says. "If it's cotton, as soon as the stalks are mowed or pulled, come in behind that, pull soil samples, and then begin putting together and executing a plan."

If soil moisture is too dry or too wet, it will skew soil sample results. Also, it is important to sample at about the same time each year to avoid seasonal variability in soil tests.

Soil pH is another important factor, Mullenix says. "If we're mindful of our soil pH, then we give the nutrients that are in the soil the maximum ability to be available to the plants. Managing soil pH in a tight range is imperative. Lime will be the cheapest and most beneficial soil amendment you'll ever apply, even more so this coming year."



**GreenPoint Ag's AccuField — a full-service ag technology and information platform — can help growers make more efficient use of fertilizer applications.**

Applying just one ton or a half ton of lime at a time is no longer good enough, he says.

"It's rare that a grower doesn't get a good result by pulling the soil samples and then variably applying lime instead of doing a straight rate," he explains. "The difference in savings on lime usually pays for the soil sampling, lab analysis, and the fee for customized recommendations for a soil fertility plan."

AccuField is equally beneficial for tech-savvy growers and for those who prefer a hands-off approach, Mullenix says.

"We have growers who want to sit down with paper maps, and they never have to log onto a computer," he says. "Growers can work with GreenPoint Ag or their Co-op to execute a soil fertility or variable-rate lime program."

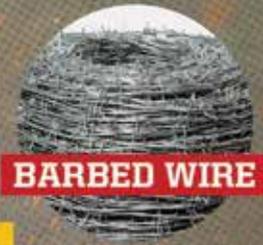
"On the flip side, some growers enjoy logging into AccuField to set up or tweak their plans themselves. If you recognize the need on your farm for technology, let us come out and help work up a plan customized for you."

Entering its 10th year of service to growers, AccuField has made a commitment to increase its offerings and deliverables.

"Our focus in this 10th year moving forward is to capitalize on enhanced metrics and return on investment tools in bringing precision ag to life for growers in a way they might not have envisioned before," Mullenix says. "We started 10 years ago with a team of one, and now we have 12 precision ag specialists who serve a 10-state footprint. We have a multi-tier support staff to give farmers what they need and when they need it because farming doesn't wait on anyone."



MADE IN THE U.S.A.



BARBED WIRE



FENCING



AND MORE!

# FORGED

TO STAND THE TEST OF TIME

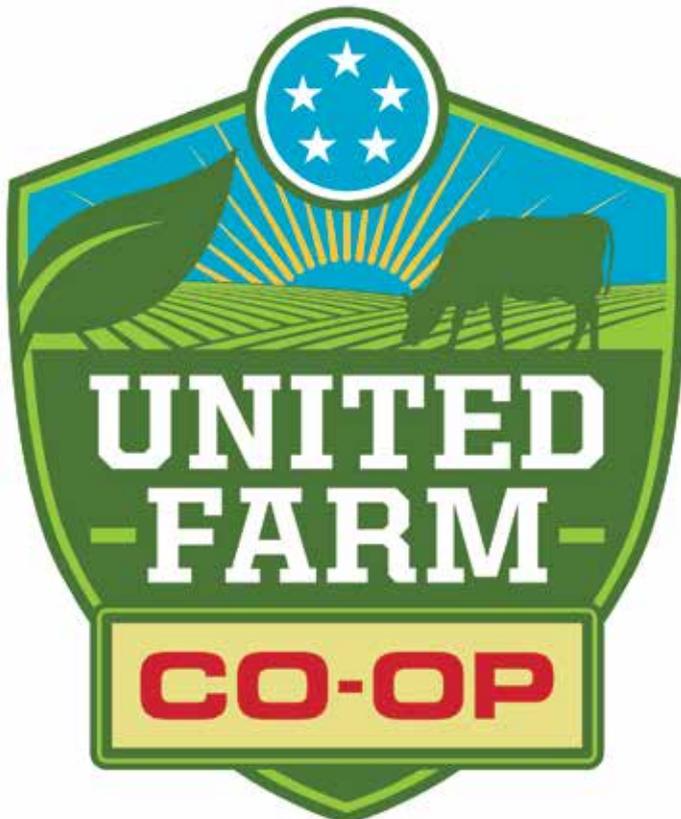
A COOPERATIVE  
BRAND OWNED  
BY YOU



herdsmanbrand.com

SEE YOUR

CO-OP



# THANK YOU!



In the spirit of cooperation,  
we are very thankful and  
appreciative to each and  
every one of you who  
donated to the  
Waverly Relief Fund.

[www.unitedfhcoop.com](http://www.unitedfhcoop.com)



Wolf River Valley Growers of Pall Mall, have been supplying Tennessee with over 2 million annuals and perennial ornamentals, like poinsettias, that are distributed to various retailers, garden centers, and more than 50 wholesale customers along with hundreds of fundraisers each year.

# From seed to store

Fentress County's Wolf River Valley Growers has provided Tennessee with large varieties of annuals and perennial ornamentals like poinsettias since 1982

Story by Allison Farley  
Photos by Hannah Nave Lewis

**A**s you drive through the tiny Fentress County hamlet of Pall Mall in the fall, it is hard to miss the Wolf River Valley Growers' 56 greenhouses overflowing with bright red, pink, and white poinsettias.

That's just the kind of free marketing that the owners like. In the early 80's, the families of Bob and Margaret Pile, Mike and Connie Pile, and Linda and Bob Washburn, decided to try the greenhouse business as a way to continue family farming.

Connie and her husband, Mike, long-time members of Fentress Farmers Co-op, started

the business in 1982 with one greenhouse to grow bedding plants and poinsettias. The greenhouse proved to be a good business plan, so the other partners decided to move back and work on expansion.

Since moving home in 1984 to help make the business flourish, they haven't missed a beat. The business now grows more than two million plants a year from seeds and cuttings, and supplies stores all over Middle Tennessee.

"We produce more than 200 varieties of annuals and perennials, 100 kinds of vegetable transplants, 20 different herbs in the spring, and 85 varieties of colorful mums in the fall," says Bob. "These are distribut-

ed to various retailers, garden centers, and around 50 wholesale customers along with hundreds of fundraisers".

For a large portion of their history as a company, Wolf River sold their plants to chain stores like Lays, Hecks, and even Walmart Supercenter locations. But as time has passed, they have moved away from working with chain stores.

"As our business grew, we knew we wanted to vertically integrate," says Bob. "But also, we have always enjoyed partnering with more hometown stores rather than large commercial businesses."

In addition to partnering with other local retailers like Rutherford Farmers



Co-op, Wolf River has also been running its own garden center in Lenoir City for the last 20 years managed by their sister, Lisa, and her husband, Rodney Grugin. The company also owns retail locations in Lascassas, Murfreesboro, and Lebanon — all of which are run by close family members — called Valley Growers and Valley Growers Too.

Even with their large selection of plants, Wolf River is well known for its poinsettias. Each year, the company grows more than 20,000 poinsettias in three different pot sizes and over 20 different color varieties, such as classic red, pink, white, marble, red glitter, and many other shades of red and pink. Some 80 to 90 percent of these are destined to be used for fundraisers.

“Thanks to the poinsettias, we are able to help partner with churches, schools, sports teams, and other organizations,” says Linda. “On any given year, our poinsettias will be a part of 60 to 70 different fundraisers across the state.”

The farm also supplies plants for iconic Christmas décor like Knoxville’s Fantasy of Trees.

“Wolf River Valley has become a well-known family business in our area,” says Fentress Farmers Co-op Manager, Ralph Smith. “They have been a great asset for the community, and I feel lucky to have



From left, Bob Pile, Linda Washburn, and Connie Pile have spent the better part of the last 40 years growing annuals and perennials — including poinsettias — for the greater Middle Tennessee area.

had Mike Pile on our Co-op board of directors many times.”

After 40 years of building such a successful retail and wholesale business, Linda says it feels great to have something to pass on.

“I think that our children have really benefited by growing up in this environment,” says Linda. “They all have good work habits. I believe they’ve learned that if you work hard, you can not only make money, but also bring happiness to others.”

Connie’s son, Steven Pile, Linda’s son-in-law, Tony Stover, and Lisa’s son, Stuart Grugin, have all taken on roles in the family business, and Bob’s daughter, Susie Tramel, runs the two garden center locations in Murfreesboro.

“Everything has turned out better than we could’ve imagined,” says Susie. “I think having quality products and expanding our markets over time has allowed us to grow and take our business to the next level.”

For more information about Wolf River Valley Growers, visit [www.wolfriver.net](http://www.wolfriver.net).



In the fall and winter months, Wolf River Valley Growers will have 56 greenhouses overflowing with 20,000 poinsettias in three different pot sizes and over 20 different color varieties of poinsettias, including Marble, above left, and red Jubilee, above right.

# Enjoy Candlelight Christmas at Museum of Appalachia

The Museum of Appalachia in Clinton is holding its Candlelight Christmas Dec. 10 - 11. The celebration recreates a “meaningful holiday of simpler times,” say museum officials.

The recreated Appalachian community features 35 log cabins, barns, farm animals, churches, schools, and gardens. It contains more than 250,000 artifacts in three buildings, with vast collections of folk art, musical instruments, baskets, quilts, Native American artifacts, and more.

For the Christmas event, traditional trees and hand-made decorations, typical of austere pioneer days, are on display within the museum’s authentic log buildings. Visitors can wander through the village and marvel at the period treasures of a simple pioneer settlement. In the one-room, dirt-floored “Dan’l Boone” cabin, strings of popcorn and cotton bolls encir-

cle the Christmas tree, while paper chains and other ornaments trim its counterpart in the Little Tater Valley Schoolhouse.

Sweet gum and sycamore balls are strung throughout the Mark Twain Family Cabin, and a traditional silver star tops a native red cedar Christmas tree in the turn-of-the-century Peters Homestead House. Apples, nuts, homemade toys, and oranges fill stockings hung in the cabins.

The Museum Gift and Antique Shop, which features everything from hand-crafted ornaments, locally made muscadine and moonshine jellies, along with authentic pottery, baskets, quilts, and plenty of Appalachian specialties, will be available during the event for shoppers looking for stocking stuffers. The museum’s onsite restaurant will be open for visitors looking for a homemade Southern country lunch in front of the warm fireplace.



Sitting on 65 picturesque acres, the Museum of Appalachia is a living history museum, a pioneer mountain farm-village that lends voice to the people of Southern Appalachia through the artifacts and stories they left behind. Founded in 1969 by John Rice Irwin, the museum is now a non-profit organization and a Smithsonian Affiliate museum.

Regular admission rates apply for the Candlelight Christmas event. The Museum of Appalachia is located at 2819 Andersonville Highway in Clinton. It offers self-guided tours and is open seven days a week. For more information, please visit [www.museumofappalachia.org](http://www.museumofappalachia.org), contact the museum at 865-494-7680, or email [museum@museumofappalachia.org](mailto:museum@museumofappalachia.org).



**IT'S OUR NATURE TO NURTURE**

#FeedCoopFeeds

## PREMIUM FORAGE SUPPLEMENTATION



CO-OP

FEEDS

**THE OVERALL ADVANTAGES:**

- WEATHER RESISTANT
- FREE-CHOICE CONVENIENCE
- LOW DAILY COST PER HEAD
- SELF-LIMITING INTAKE CONTROL
- LESS WASTED FEED
- IMPROVED HERD PERFORMANCE AT A PREDICTABLE COST

**RATIONAL-LYX (LOW MOISTURE)**

- HI-PRO 32 BEEF TUB
- ALL NATURAL 20 BEEF & HORSE TUB
- FESCUE HI-MAG BEEF TUB
- BREEDER 28 BEEF TUB
- STRESS RELIEF BEEF TUB
- FLY CONTROL (IGR) BEEF TUB

**SENSIBLE-LYX**

- CO-OP 25% CATTLE SUPPLEMENT
- CO-OP 16% ALL-NATURAL CATTLE SUPPLEMENT
- CO-OP 24% HI-MAG CATTLE SUPPLEMENT

SEE YOUR LOCAL CO-OP FOR DETAILS

OURCOOP.COM/LIVESTOCK

# Century Bale Feeder

*The Original Poly Bale Feeder!*

## TAEP

Farm Investment Project

Tennessee Agricultural Enhancement Program



Department of Agriculture

<http://www.tn.gov/taep>

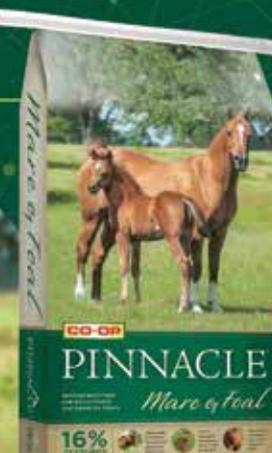


7 Year Limited  
Manufacturer  
Warranty!

## CENTURY PRODUCTS

Items available at your local

## CO-OP



## CO-OP PINNACLE HORSE FEEDS

# MARE & FOAL

**16% PELLETTED**

**PREMIER NUTRITION FOR BROODMARES AND GROWING FOALS.**

**FEATURES AND BENEFITS**  
Co-op Pinnacle Mare & Foal is a nutrient-dense, textured feed formulated to provide optimum nutrition to pregnant and lactating mares and young, growing horses up to 2 years of age. It promotes optimum foal development and immune health through age 2 and includes balanced calcium, phosphorous, copper, and zinc to support bone growth.

**IT'S OUR NATURE TO NURTURE**  
#RIDETOTHE TOP



Brandon began his knife-making venture by learning traditional blacksmithing techniques, but he soon put his own mark on the techniques necessary to turn out an exceptional product. Each knife begins with a billet of steel, the size of which depends on the intended pattern. A small knife may only require a piece that is one-inch wide by one-quarter inch thick. Larger knives may start out as 1½ or 2 inches wide. Brandon strives to “forge-to-finish” as much as possible, so there is minimal grinding to complete the knife.

# Maker's mark

Bladesmith combines art and functionality in his creations

Story and photos by Glen Liford

**W**hen Brandon Franklin is at work in his Jonesborough shop, the ring of steel on steel resonates from wall to wall. Carefully aimed strikes from a blacksmith hammer shapes simple slabs of steel as he pursues his vision for his latest creation. The knife or other item that he is making is further refined through careful finishing techniques that polish and smooth the piece until it satisfies the maker as he strives for the perfect blend of aesthetics and functionality.

Through his business, Franklin Forge, Brandon is garnering attention from fellow enthusiasts for the elegant knives produced through his techniques that incorporate the age-old craft of blacksmithing with a little help from modern methods like CAD (computer aided design) software.

“Before I got into this, a buddy asked me to go to the [Atlanta knife] show, and I had no interest,” he says. “My wife was away, and I went with him. That started my addiction to blades.”

Brandon, a customer of Washington Farmers Cooperative, became interested in the craft after watching the popular “Forged in Fire” television show on the History Channel. Each episode pits four contestants against one another as they forge bladed weapons in a series of three elimination rounds, with the winning bladesmith taking home \$10,000 and earning the title of “Forged in Fire Champion.”

“I stumbled across the show and became addicted to it,” says Brandon. “I thought, ‘I can do this. Or at the very least, I want to try.’”

Brandon knew little about blacksmithing, so he reached out to a local craftsman for training. The process appealed to his creative side, and he began learning the procedures by making simple items like hooks, hinges, and other pieces with the guidance of his friend for a year and a half or so. He later met Jason Knight, who is a master bladesmith, and attended one of the knife maker's classes.

“There is no better person from which to learn the craft than someone who holds that title,” says Brandon.

The hands-on nature of the process appealed to Brandon, but it was the pure act of making something out of nothing that drove him to continue. He has always loved working with his hands, but he strayed from those tendencies as he selected his career. He studied computer science at Tennessee Technological University in Cookeville before following his future wife, Emily, to East Tennessee State University in Johnson City where he completed his degree. He then worked as a software developer for 11 years before finally plunging into knife making and blacksmithing full time in November 2020.

“The computer work just wasn’t scratching the itch that I had growing up,” he says, noting that he still does website development as a side business.

As a child in the tiny community of Rover in Middle Tennessee, Brandon often got into trouble with his parents as he tore into perfectly good toys to see how they worked or make his own modifications. Later, his stepdad taught him how work on cars, doing me-

chanical work, welding, and painting.

“That was really the awakening for me to become a maker,” he says. “I wanted to create things that make people’s lives better, not just do it for myself.”

The transition to blacksmithing and knife making allowed him to combine his penchant for making things with his technical understanding and artistic abilities. He uses the vintage “brute de forge” methods depicted on the show, coupled with CAD (computer aided design) techniques to add his unique twist on his own creations.

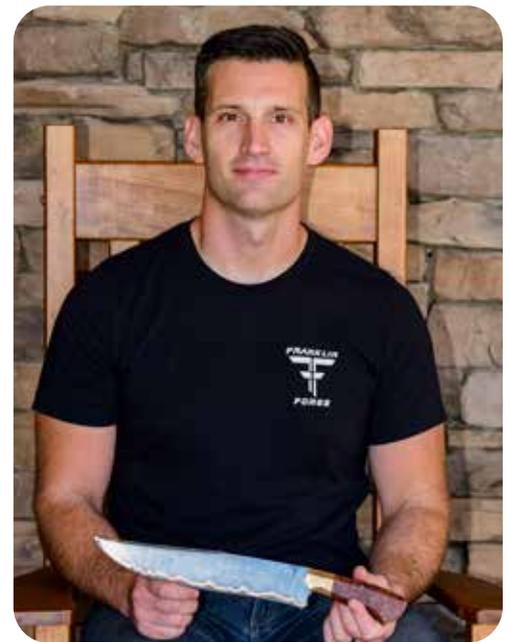
He often begins the creative process sketching his ideas with pen and paper. Later, those drawings may be adapted to wooden patterns or, in some cases, output with his own 3D printer so he can get a better feel for the heft of a particular design.

“Obviously, you can make anything your mind can imagine, but that doesn’t mean it’s going to cut well or function as a particular type of knife,” he explains. “I try to combine an artistic approach with a practical understanding of how a knife will be used to make unique pieces that stand out from everyone else’s stuff.”

He starts with quality steel in a variety of compositions. Each one is unique and brings its characteristics as far as edge retention, grain structure, and toughness, Brandon explains.



**LEFT:** This simple propane forge heats and reheats the steel to temperatures where the material can be easily formed into shapes that match Brandon’s vision for his creations. Sketches and wooden or 3D printed pieces guide him as he develops the final product. **RIGHT:** Brandon’s techniques bring out the unique and distinctive characteristics of the metal and the handle materials to create a finished knife that is a work of art. This blade on this fighter knife features forge welded Damascus steel, copper, and a 80CRV2 core with high-grade red amboyna handles.



“They are all high carbon steel that will harden and make great blades,” he says. “But some will perform better for different purposes, like a kitchen knife or a Skinner.”

As he begins shaping the steel, he will often have one of the wooden or CAD-generated patterns laying nearby to guide his process.

Like the steel, handle materials are critical to each knife’s purpose and appearance. He chooses various woods, stag, bone, or synthetic material to fit with the character of the piece.

“I will choose something different, if I know the knife will need to be water resistant,” he says. “I like to choose something like a stabilized, exotic wood or a synthetic like G10 or micarta for durability. Exotic woods can be the

most beautiful because the wood’s burl is like a fingerprint. Each one is unique.”

Stag handles are popular, too, and he says sometimes a hunter will bring him antlers to use in a special knife.

“That’s really cool,” says Brandon. “They have a story behind it that is unique to them, and they can pass it down.”

Finished knives can be priced from \$100 to \$1,500 depending on the size, materials used, the finish, and the amount of work spent on the final piece. He markets his creations through his website, on social media like Instagram and Facebook, via word of mouth, and at shows, like The Blade Show held in Atlanta each June.

Checkout Brandon’s work at his website <https://www.thefranklinforge.com>.



**LEFT:** Brandon is comfortable blending old and modern methods as he creates his knives. This power hammer can accomplish rough shaping of billets of steel in much less time than he could with only a traditional blacksmith hammer. **RIGHT:** Franklin Forge custom knives are available in a variety of patterns and sizes, and incorporate different materials. Inventory is shown on Brandon’s website that is updated regularly as new versions become available.

## Ag Business In Focus



The First Farmers Co-op Replacement Heifer Sale was held Saturday, October 23, at the Co-op in Lexington. Some 40 pens in lots of three head per pen were sold at the fall sale for a total of 120-head. The lots could be open, bred, or first-calf pair heifers. Scott Woolfolk, above, works the ring during the auction. The popular sale drew cattlemen from throughout the region.

— Photo by Dale Bryson



### Corrugated Plastic Pipe and Metal Pipe

High Density Polyethylene Pipe 4" - 60" Dual and Single Wall  
Corrugated Metal Pipe 6" - 144" Round and Pipe Arch  
Prefabricated Fittings and End Sections  
Farm Pond Risers



Perforated Pipe for Grain Storage Aeration



Your Single Source for Storm Drain Solutions

Family Business - Est. 1981

[Southeastculvert.com](http://Southeastculvert.com)

Phone: 770.868.5599

Featuring Bulls Sired By:  
JBS Crockett 622  
KG Justified 3023  
Musgrave 316 Exclusive  
Musgrave Cracker Jack  
Tehama Tahoe B767  
Deer Valley Growth Fund  
And More

## 18TH ANNUAL GENETIC EXCELLENCE ANGUS BULL SALE

Selling 80+ Registered Angus Bulls  
and 120+ Commercial Heifers

JANUARY 1, 2022  
SATURDAY | 12:00 NOON CST  
TENNESSEE TECH UNIVERSITY | COOKEVILLE, TN

[GENETICEXCELLENCE.COM](http://GENETICEXCELLENCE.COM)



Bulls Powered by Purina and Ag1



# The Next Generation of Animal Management™

## again and again.



W-0 Weigh Scale and  
Animal Performance App



### Next. More than just a word, it's what drives us.

In the early 1930s, Bill Gallagher invented the electric fence. That bit of energized innovation has become the core of who we are today. Generation after generation since then, our customers have been our true motivation. You spark us to deliver what's next — high-quality, technology-driven, cloud-based energizers and weigh scales with the intention of making life on the farm easier, more productive, and more profitable. But we know easy doesn't come easy, that's why we are always ready to provide you with on-site support. Because at Gallagher, we're ready to inspire you — again and again.



Download the Animal Performance App with the QR code. Check out the W-0 Weigh Scale, Electric Fencing products, and find your Territory Manager at [am.gallagher.com](http://am.gallagher.com)





**COCCOA**  
*all the way*



Nothing is better on a cold winter day than a delicious cup of hot cocoa or a rich cocoa-themed dish. Celebrate National Cocoa Day on December 13 by enjoying a new drink or dish that was submitted by our awesome readers!



## No-bake Chocolate Oatmeal Cookies

**Margie Gunn**

McEwen

United Farm & Home Co-op

- 2 cups granulated sugar
- ½ cup sweet milk
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- ¼ cup margarine
- ¼ cup cocoa
- ½ cup creamy peanut butter
- 1 ½ cup raw quick-cooking oats

Mix together sugar, milk, vanilla, margarine, and cocoa. Bring to a boil for two minutes. Remove from heat and add peanut butter and oats. Stir quickly and drop by tablespoons onto wax paper. Let cool.

## Classic Chocolate Fudge

**Joyce Jackson**

Huntingdon

Carroll Farmers Co-op

- 2 pkgs. or 16 squares semi-sweet chocolate
- 1 (14 oz.) can Eagle brand sweetened, condensed milk
- 1 cup pecans or walnuts, coarsely chopped
- 2 tsp. vanilla

Line an 8-inch square pan with foil. Microwave chocolate milk on high for 2 to 3 minutes until melted, stirring frequently. Mix in vanilla and nuts and spread evenly into pan. Refrigerate 2 hours or until firm. Lift

foil out of pan and cut fudge into pieces. For softer fudge, let stand at room temperature for 1 hour. The fudge will store in refrigerator for up to a week.

## Iced Brownies

**Pat Jones**

Flintville

Lincoln Farmers Co-op

- 2 cups sugar
- ½ cup cocoa
- 1 cup Crisco shortening
- Pinch of salt
- 4 eggs
- ½ cup evaporated milk
- 1 cup flour
- ½ tsp. vanilla
- 1 cup nuts

For the icing:

- 1 lb. pkg. powdered sugar
- Pinch of salt
- 3 tbsp. cocoa
- ¾ stick margarine, melted
- Evaporated milk

Cream first 4 ingredients together. Add remaining ingredients and mix well. Bake in a greased and floured pan at 350 degrees for 20 to 30 minutes. For the icing, combine ingredients and add enough evaporated milk to mixture to bring to spreading consistency. Spread over the hot brownies and cut into squares.

## Honey's Cocoa Pudding

**Wanda Spivey**

Orlinda

Robertson Cheatham

Farmers Co-op

- 5 tbsp. cocoa

- 2 cups sugar
- 5 tbsp. flour
- 1 can evaporated milk
- 1 can water
- 3 eggs, beaten
- ¼ tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 3 tbsp. margarine

Cook all ingredients, except vanilla and margarine, in a pan until the mixture thickens. Take off stove and add the vanilla and margarine. May eat warm or cool.

## Cocoa Pie

**Gail Allen**

Greenbrier

Robertson Cheatham

Farmers Co-op

- 1 ¼ cups sugar
- 3 tbsp. cocoa
- 3 tbsp. self-rising flour
- 3 egg yolks
- Dash of salt
- 2 cups milk
- 2 tsp. vanilla
- 2 tbsp. butter
- Meringue:
- 6 egg whites
- ½ tsp cream of tartar
- ¼ cup sugar

Mix sugar, flour, cocoa, and salt together and set aside. Mix egg yolks and milk together, then add to dry ingredients and mix well.

Cook over medium heat until thick, stirring constantly. Use an 8-inch black skillet. When thick, remove from heat and add 2 tablespoons butter and 2 teaspoons vanilla. Pour into an 9-inch graham cracker crust and top with meringue. Put in oven at 350 degrees for 10 to 15 mins or until brown.

To make the meringue, beat egg whites with electric mixer

until they start to foam, then add cream of tartar. Beat some more, then add sugar slowly and beat until stiff peaks form.

## Hot Mocha Mix

**Jo Ann Hughes**

Tompkinsville, Ky.

Macon Trousdale Farmers Co-op

- 2 cups sugar
- 2 cups nondairy creamer
- ½ cup instant coffee powder
- 2 cups instant nonfat dry milk
- 1 cup cocoa

Combine all ingredients and mix well. Store the mixture in an airtight container. To serve, place 2 tablespoons of the mix in a cup, add one cup of boiling water, and stir well. Top with a marshmallow or whipped cream, if desired. The mix yields enough for 50 (8-oz.) servings.

## Tunnel of Fudge Cake

**Wilma McMillan**

Parrottsville

Smokey Mountain Farmers Co-op

- 3 sticks melted margarine
- 6 eggs
- 1 ½ cups sugar
- 2 cups plain flour
- 1 cup chopped nuts
- 1 box chocolate frosting mix
- Cream sugar and butter

together. Add eggs one at a time. Use your hands to stir in flour, frosting mix, and nuts. Pour into a greased and floured tube pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 1 hour. Let set in pan for 2 hours before removing.

## Cherries in February

Portably delicious and sweet, cherries are low in calories and chock full of fiber, vitamins, minerals, nutrients, and that sweet-tart flavor that bursts in your mouth with every bite. Help us celebrate National Cherry Month by submitting your favorite recipes using cherries of all kinds!

While most of us think about sweet and juicy cherries being used in desserts, you would be surprised how well they can work in savory dishes. Help us gather cherry-themed dishes of all kinds that are sure to have people looking forward to a bumper crop of cherries this upcoming summer. The person submitting the recipe

judged best will be named "Cook of the Month" for the February 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, December 27, is the deadline for cherry 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](mailto: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](http://www.ourcoop.com).

## Our Country Churches



310th in a series to show where our rural Co-op friends worship

### Faith Baptist Church in Lawrence County

Faith Baptist Church serves the community of Loretto, a city nestled in beautiful Lawrence County. The congregation is led by Pastor Steve Headrick. The church invites anyone to visit on Sunday mornings for Sunday school beginning at 9:00 a.m. and worship at 10:00 a.m. Sunday and Wednesday evening services are held each week at 6:00 p.m. The church also leads members in a special discipleship training class beginning at 5:00 p.m. on Sunday evenings before the service.

SALE AUCTIONEER  
PIT KEMMER (931) 335-4628  
pkemmer@frontiernet.net

*The*  
**PLATINUM ALLIANCE**  
ALL BREED BULL & COMMERCIAL HEIFER *Sale*

*December 4, 2021 at Noon - Hyder-Burks Ag Pavilion*

There will be food and refreshments to purchase on sale day.

Info at [platinumalliancebulls.com](http://platinumalliancebulls.com)  
Amanda Houser - 931-267-1802  
For online bidding go to [kemmerauctioneers.com](http://kemmerauctioneers.com)



**CHEVROLET BUICK GMC**  
Murfreesboro

## AMAZING SAVINGS ON ALL NEW VEHICLES!

Don't miss out on exclusive **CO-OP** Member

Discounts available ONLY at Chevrolet Buick GMC Cadillac  
of Murfreesboro!

Choose a 2022 Chevrolet Silverado or  
2022 GMC Sierra 1500 and save as much as

**\$8,000 OFF MSRP!**

(ON SELECT IN STOCK MODELS. CANNOT BE  
COMBINED WITH ANY OTHER OFFERS.)

**LIFETIME  
WARRANTY**

Call Justin Young at 1-888-711-7709 or  
e-mail at [jyoung@gmmurfreesboro.com](mailto:jyoung@gmmurfreesboro.com)

960 John R. Rice Boulevard, Murfreesboro, TN 37129  
[www.chevroletbuickgmc.com/murfreesboro.com](http://www.chevroletbuickgmc.com/murfreesboro.com)



BUSINESS ELITE

Free delivery in  
the state of Tennessee.

Some restrictions apply. See dealer for details.



FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA!



# MADE BY YOUR NEIGHBORS OWNED BY YOU

36.0156° N, 86.5819° W  
LA VERGNE, TN

-  - MADE EXCLUSIVELY IN TENNESSEE
-  - PROVEN STRENGTH
-  - BUILT TO STAND THE TEST OF TIME

SEE YOUR LOCAL CO-OP



GATES • PANELS • LIVESTOCK HANDLING & FEEDING EQUIPMENT & MORE



**CO-OP**

**METAL FAB**



## Trees, please

### Woodbury's David and Dawn Gray build a business based on a love of family and Christmas

Story and photos by Cara Moore

**F**or most, the warm feelings of joy and nostalgia that are inspired by the Christmas holiday are short-lived. But for David and Dawn Gray, the magic lasts all year.

The Grays operate Wildwood Christmas Tree Farm, a small, family-owned operation in the rolling hills of Woodbury. The couple's vision for the farm began in 2005 as a way to incorporate their land into their retirement plan.

David had always been a woodworker, but lumber was hard to come by in his native New Mexico home trees are scarce due to the dry and arid landscape. In 1987, he and his father, Orval, purchased a farm together that had previously been leased as part of Lipscomb University's agricultural program for cattle, but David says he was more naturally inclined to work with trees rather than livestock.

"We knew we needed a quicker turnover rate than with hardwoods, and Christmas trees presented themselves as the perfect crop for us," says David. "Dawn is a big Christmas enthusiast and was quick to jump on board. With the guidance of our friends, Joe and Judy Clayton — who were the original owners of Country Cove Christmas Tree Farm in Murfreesboro — we were able to plant our first seedlings in 2007."

From those first seedlings, the Grays' operation has since turned into 9,500 trees with varieties including White Pine, Norway Spruce, Colorado Blue Spruce, Turkish Fir, Canadian Hemlock, Canaan Fir, Nordmann Fir, and Momi Fir. Wildwood also offers "Ball & Burlap" live trees which can be used in a family's home through the holidays and then re-planted in their yard to be enjoyed for many years to come. Whether visitors want a 6-foot tree or a 12-foot tree, a thin or wide one, or to cut it themselves with a handsaw or load up a pre-cut specimen, Wildwood is able to accommodate.

Visiting Wildwood Christmas Tree Farm has become a Christmas tradition for many families — a friendly environment where children and adults alike can experience

the "thrill of the hunt" as they find the perfect tree to display in their home.

"Our goal from the very beginning was to develop an experience for families out here on the farm, where they could create lasting memories that they would cherish for years to come," says Dawn. "We love talking to the families and getting to know them a little more each year."

David says the relationships he and Dawn build through their farm "fuels the passion" for what they do.

"My favorite part of the farm is the people," says David. "We've made some of the best friends with people who come year after year. We've learned their life story and watched their kids grow up. One young man started coming here with his family when he was still in high school, and now he's grown up and married — but he doesn't miss a Christmas out here!"

It's easy to turn Christmas tree shopping into an all-day event when visiting Wildwood. The farm hosts numerous activities for families to enjoy, including a treehouse play area, craft station for painting ornaments, hayrides, free hot cocoa, and a gift shop.

Running such a bustling business is a team effort, and during the holiday season, it's all-hands-on deck. Dawn and David's

sons — Caleb, 14, and Judah, 10 — work with dad outside, tying trees, shaking them off, and loading them into customers' vehicles. Daughter Hannah, 19, works in the store with Dawn, running the cash registers and helping customers. David's mother, Esther, handles the craft area, and his father, Orval, drives the tractor for the hayrides.

The Woodbury branch store of Rutherford Farmers Co-op is an important part of the team, as well. The Co-op provides farm necessities for the Grays, including baler twine for the trees and gas for the lawnmowers.

Dawn stresses that above all, the farm provides valuable life lessons for the kids.

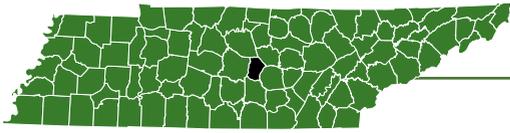
"We're building great character in our children through hard work, as well as giving them people skills and customer service experience," she says. "We love to see everyone out here having fun, laughing, and cutting up with each other."

She adds that the family is blessed to work in an industry so closely associated with such a special time of the year.

"Christmas is by far my favorite holiday," says Dawn. "It holds so much meaning for our family, and this farm has turned out to be far more rewarding than we ever thought possible."



Maintaining and growing the trees at Wildwood Christmas Tree Farm is a family effort. David and Dawn Gray, along with daughter Hannah, left, son Caleb, back, and son Judah, right, work year-round to plant, fertilize, water, and shear the trees, as well as mow the grass almost constantly and manage the Christmas shop during the holiday season.



## Woodbury



*“When people visit, everybody’s always in a good mood. Nobody’s ever upset. Everybody’s happy. Kids are excited. It’s that time of year — it’s the grand adventure.” — David Gray*

Sent to you compliments of:

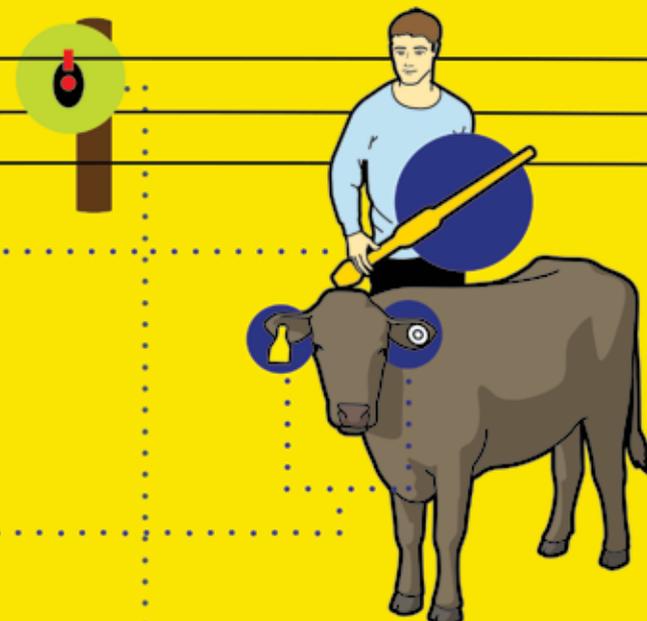
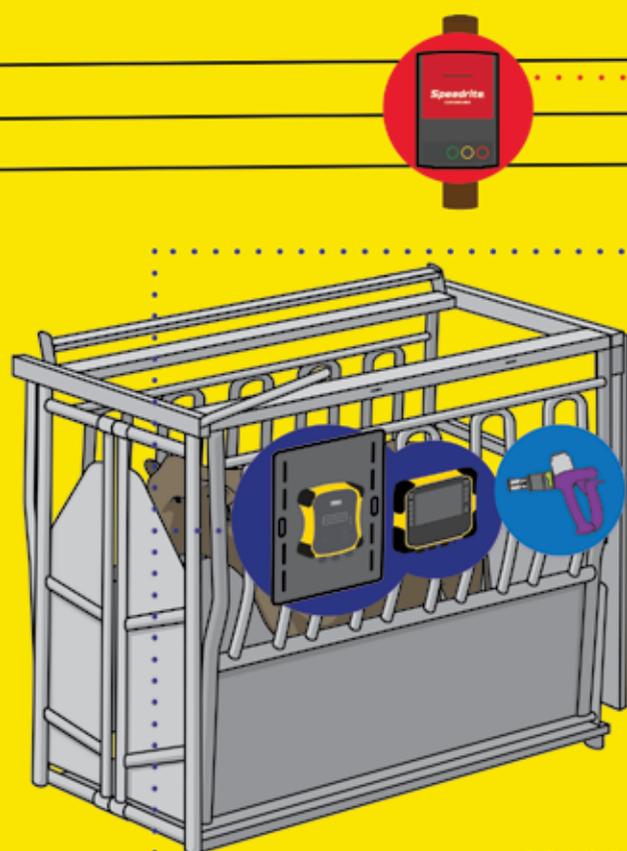
Tennessee Farmers Cooperative  
180 Old Nashville Hwy. (PO Box 3003)  
LaVergne, TN 37086-1983

Presorted Standard  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
Pewaukee, WI  
PERMIT NO. 1364

Visit our official website at [ourcoop.com](http://ourcoop.com)  
Follow us on     

DATAMARS  
**Livestock™**

# Precision livestock management.



At Datamars Livestock, we offer tools for a complete livestock management solution from electric fencing and infrastructure, to livestock scales and identification, to animal health delivery systems.

For more information, visit [livestock.datamars.com](http://livestock.datamars.com).



**Tru-Test.**  
DATAMARS

**Z**  
**TAGS.**  
DATAMARS

**Speedrite.**  
DATAMARS

**Patriot.**  
DATAMARS

**njphillips.**  
DATAMARS