

THE COOPERATOR

SEPTEMBER 2021

CONNECTING THE **CO-OP** COMMUNITY



Rotational strategy

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Editor: Glen Liford

gliford@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

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P.O. Box 3003
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Phone: (615) 793-8339
E-mail: tlwter@ourcoop.com

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Odd collection

Vintage advertising items among reminders of a beloved uncle



Glen Liford

Editor

While back, I was going through a box of random keepsakes that had been in my garage since my uncle, Clay Butcher, passed away in 2010. The collection of items were remnants from his antique rolltop desk.

Why I had waited so long to go through the items is a mystery even to me. The box had been sitting near the door to the house, and I must have walked by it thousands of times, but never found the time to complete what should have been an easy task of sorting through the contents, discarding what was of no use to me and finding a permanent place for the rest.

I'm not sure if it was grief that kept me from confronting the mess or just a severe case of procrastination. But when I finally dug deep into the cardboard container, I was pleasantly surprised as I found plenty of reminders of Uncle Butch and his meticulous nature.

He grew up during the Depression, and I'm sure those tough times shaped his behavior. He was frugal to a fault and knew how to stretch a dollar. The contents of the box reflected this philosophy as well. It was stocked to the brim with nothing really important, but in as neat a way as possible.

Perhaps one of the best examples of his personality was one cylinder about the size of a paper towel tube that was carefully wrapped in brown craft paper with sturdy packing tape securing the seams. It had a serious heft, and I was more than curious as I carefully sliced through the tough tape to see what was inside. The contents were more than a little disappointing. The durable tube only yielded sheets of blank notepaper that Uncle Butch had secured for future use. I guess I'm not as frugal, so I decided to toss those. (I prefer my paper flat with minimal dogeared edges.)

There was also a neatly wound roll of copper wire that I'm positive was left over from the time he helped my brother, Joe, build an electric motor for his 4-H electricity project. I remember them tracking down the wire that had to be either coated or uncoated — I don't remember which — for the project to work properly. Though I'll never be building an electric motor of my own, the tangled wire went into the pile of items I chose to keep.

And so, it went — keep this and toss that — until near the bottom of the eclectic heap, I found something that stumped me. Neatly wrapped in tissue and tucked inside a clear baggy were 16 colorful tin pins emblazoned with the names of various tobacco products. A bit of research on the Internet revealed them to be chewing tobacco tin tags that were attached to tobacco plugs from around 1870 to the 1930s. Their original purpose was to ensure purchasers of the purity and quality of the tobacco they had purchased. The pins have neat graphics and are popular with collectors of vintage advertising. They aren't particularly valuable, but Uncle Butch and I shared a fondness for vintage items, and I think they will make a nice display for my home office. They're a reminder of a very special person, and they deserve more than just being tossed in a box.



These colorful tin tags were a part of the packaging of chewing tobacco plugs from about 1870 to the 1930s and ensured users the product was the brand they had purchased and not been tampered with. The quarter in the center gives an idea of scale.



Gibson County 4-H member Tyler Campbell, left, and Crockett County 4-H'er Amelia Boone learn to shoot archery for the first time thanks to Ridley 4-H Camp Staff member, Taylor Gobble, during the 4-H Traveling Road Show visit to Milan.

Taking the show on the road

Tennessee 4-H Camp Centers offered day camps across the state to help provide opportunities for students amidst a global pandemic

Story by Allison Farley
Photos Submitted by UT Extension
4-H Agents

During a summer full of canceled events and limited in-person opportunities for youth, Tennessee 4-H staff worked hard to bring 4-H Camp to students across the state as they took the popular experience on the road.

"While we were working through camp plans for this summer, most of the state was still under mandates of reduced opera-

tions," says Daniel Collins, State Extension specialist for 4-H Camping, STEM, and Performing Arts Troupe. "We knew that, with us not being able to have anything 4-H camp-related in 2020, many 4-Hers would be chomping at the bit to get out and do something this summer."

To provide the most students with a chance to experience a taste of 4-H Junior Camp, Extension staff developed the "Traveling 4-H Camp Roadshow," which made a stop in nearly every county across the state. Some smaller county 4-H groups collabo-

rated and hosted the show together, while other communities with more members staged the event on their own.

"Our agents were able to work together with 4-H Camp staffs to make the most of their day camps with the students," says Daniel.

During a typical summer, thousands of fourth, fifth, and sixth grade youth from across the state would attend traditional Junior 4-H Camp at one of the four 4-H

(See 4-H Camp, page 6)

4-H Camp

(continued from page 5)

Centers located in Columbia, Crossville, Greeneville, and Middleton. They would enjoy traditional activities like kayaking, canoeing, swimming, playing sports, archery, crafts, and fishing, and would learn about electricity, wildlife, ecology, photography, and more.

“While we knew it wasn’t the same experience, I think campers loved getting to participate in some aspect of 4-H camp, because for many of them, this was their first taste of camp,” says Lacy Harnage, 4-H Center Manager at the Clyde York 4-H Center in Crossville. “We hope that it has piqued their interest to come experience over-night camp when we get the chance to offer that again in the future.”

The roadshow brought crafts, portable archery and ax-throwing stations, and even a gaga pit, the classic 4-H camp game that is a version of dodgeball played on the ground inside of a hexagon.

“We knew those students who had been to camp before would be excited to play gaga again,” says Daniel.

Tennessee Farmers Cooperative was proud to help sponsor the tie-dye 4-H Clover t-shirt craft that students made during their day of camp.

In addition to the classic camp activities, some counties either created their own or requested other parts of the traditional experience they liked.

“Some local staff asked, ‘Could you also bring your STEM program?’ or ‘Can you bring your critter guy?’ While it did depend on the 4-H center visiting them, many sessions were able to offer these extra activities thanks to the efforts and flexibility of Terry, Lacy, and Scotty, our center managers,” says Daniel. “They are absolutely fantastic and worked with our agents in the counties to develop a schedule and activities specific for their counties.”

For many 4-Hers, the day camp was an opportunity to experience camp that may not have been available in a typical summer.

“Some agents that I’ve talked to say they are going to continue to offer day camps in addition to regular camp in their counties,” says Daniel. “They feel like they can reach more 4-Hers just by providing a couple of opportunities for them to explore new project areas and interests without the members being required to stay overnight.”

It’s because of this, Daniel adds, that the state staff would like to help develop new opportunities to be offered on the local level.

“I want to see us continue to offer these type of experiences and to develop the resources for our agents and our program assistants across the state to be consistent as they provide some great opportunities for our kids.”

Overall, Lacy believes that the extra effort of taking this show on the road was well worth it.

“With us being able to bring the roadshow to their county, they were able to get a taste of what a week would be like,” says Lacy. “I believe that the day camp experience has given them an increased interest in what 4-H has to offer and the confidence to be able to attend for a week next summer!”



Lincoln County 4-H'ers quickly learned how to play the 4-H camp classic game, Gaga, with the help of camp staff member Jayme Ozburn during their day camp at Ralph Askins School in Fayetteville.



LEFT: Audrey Richardson from Bradley County holds Amber, the corn snake, at the Bradley County 4-H Traveling Roadshow. MIDDLE: Addison Ward, a 4th grader in Johnson County, enjoyed tie-dying her 4-H t-shirt. The shirts used for the tie-dying station were all sponsored by Tennessee Farmers Cooperative. RIGHT: Robertson County 4-H was able to host 47 fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade students at their local fair grounds for the Traveling Roadshow where many threw axes for the first time.

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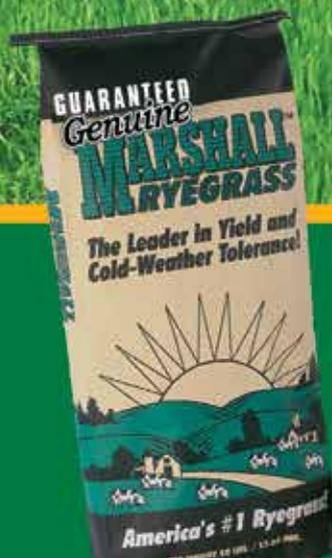
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The newly elected 2021-2022 state officer team celebrates their victory after putting in many years of dedication and hard work to obtain their officer positions. From left is Harrison Falcofsky, president; Kallie Renner, East Tenn. State vice president; Kaylee Scott, Middle Tenn. State vice president; Ethan Hall, West Tenn. State vice president; Nic Bradley, secretary; Sophie Helton, treasurer; Katie McKinney, reporter; and Madison McDonald, sentinel.

Building up Future Farmers, Piece by Piece

Over 1,500 FFA members take the city of Gatlinburg by storm during the 93rd annual Tennessee FFA State Convention

Story and photos by Cara Moore

The old cliché “absence makes the heart grow fonder” was recently proven accurate for more than 1,500 Tennessee FFA members.

With in-person events in 2020 canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, FFA members from across the state were eager to reunite June 28-30 at the 93rd Tennessee FFA State Convention. The event was a lively celebration of the beloved organization, an excuse to visit with old friends, and an opportunity to recognize the achievements of numerous individuals in agriculture.

The state convention was held in downtown Gatlinburg, where more than 1,500 FFA members and agriculture educators congregated in the Gatlinburg Convention Center to

participate in workshops, educational sessions, and career and leadership development events. Participants were also treated to inspirational messages from keynote speakers and state officer retiring addresses and were given the opportunity to interact with universities, businesses, and industry leaders throughout the Career and Trade Show.

The convention’s theme of “Piece by Piece” was evident in the camaraderie and enthusiasm of the attendees. Although the convention could not function in its normal capacity due to safety guidelines, members, educators, and sponsors alike were excited to begin building back the pieces that make the gathering so special and memorable each year.

Tennessee FFA members worked diligently year-round despite the pandemic for the opportunity to walk across the stage at the

state convention and receive an award for their achievements. A few of the most notable honors awarded to students were the State FFA Degree, Agricultural Proficiency Awards, and State Star Awards.

Those who received one of the five State Star Awards were invited to participate in the 2021 Tennessee FFA Star Tour, which kicked off July 23. All five award recipients journeyed across the state, sharing the impact of their Supervised Agricultural Experiences with businesses, industry leaders, and other FFA members.

State Star Greenhand award recipient Abigail Berny expressed gratitude for seeing her hard work as a freshman pay off.

“I feel so honored to be announced as the Star Greenhand winner, which is something I’ve always wanted to do to inspire others

in the agricultural industry,” said Abigail, a member of the Page FFA chapter. “I was really excited.”

Tennessee Farmers Cooperative (TFC), with the support of their member cooperatives, Co-op employees, and customers, was able to sponsor several elements of the event including the 8th General Session, Diversified Agricultural Production Proficiency, Diversified Livestock Production Proficiency, Prepared Public Speaking LDE, Star in Agribusiness, and State Officer Selection Process.

TFC’s Event and Sales Support Manager Jimmy Ogilvie represented TFC at the convention and helped recognize the achievements of such outstanding individuals.

“Our cooperative system is very pleased to play an important role in the lives of the next generation of leaders in agriculture,” said Jimmy. “Anything we can do to help these young leaders be successful is gratifying as they begin to mold their vision for their future. We are grateful to be able to have a small part in the success of these FFA members.”

Governor Bill Lee made a special appearance at the convention, making history as the first sitting Tennessee governor to attend the State FFA Convention. Governor Lee addressed the convention attendees during the 5th General Session and said it was important for him to show the FFA members that they have his support and to recognize the significance of agriculture in the state.

“It’s important that we are investing in the young people that are investing in agriculture so we can ensure a strong economy,” said Lee. “These young people are the future of ag.”

Governor Lee encouraged members to continue their FFA journey for the good of their state.

“You have your entire life laid out before you, and regardless of what has led you to this spot that you are in today, you have the opportunity to create a great future,” he told the attendees. “You will determine what the future of this state is. Government cannot address the needs of a society, but the people can.”

During the final day of the convention, there was excitement in the air as hundreds of members gathered to find out who would be elected as the new state FFA officer team for the 2021-2022 year. There were 15 candidates that vied for the positions, and after an intense process — including a test, writing prompt, and multiple interviews — eight candidates were selected.

The new state officer team was announced amid upbeat music, flashing lights, and confetti cannons. The 2021-22 team is Harrison Falcofsky, Stevens Creek, president; Nic Bradley, Lincoln, secretary; Ethan Hall, Scotts Hill,

West Tenn. State vice president; Kaylee Scott, Lebanon, Middle Tenn. State vice president; Kallie Renner, South Greene, East Tenn. State vice president; Sophie Helton, Stone, treasurer; Katie McKinney, David Crockett, reporter; and Madison McDonald, Wilson Central, sentinel.

Harrison Falcofsky could hardly contain his excitement over the new position and expressed his eagerness to make an impact on the agricultural industry during his year of leadership.

“It takes that 2 percent of farmers to feed the other 98 percent of the world,” he said. “That’s why it’s extremely important that we continue to do what we can to help agriculture as a whole.”

As the 2020-21 retiring state officer team shared their farewell addresses, they were given the opportunity to inspire their fellow FFA leaders and members with messages of perseverance and strength. In her parting remarks, 2020-21 state president Erin Welch shared encouraging words to the newly elected officers, saying she was certain that FFA will continue to grow and thrive under their leadership.

“Do not back down,” she advised. “Do not

give up. Remember that you are still here persevering.”

Abbey Strong, the 2020-21 State Sentinel, reflected on her final year as a state officer before beginning the next phase of her life.

“Where do you even start when talking about an organization that has given you so much?” she began. “The last year of my life was spent in service for Tennessee FFA, and I could not be more thankful for the opportunities I was given, especially during a pandemic. This organization has given me five years of memories, life lessons, and friendships I could never forget!”

For more information regarding the FFA organization and membership, visit ffa.org.



Jimmy Ogilvie, TFC’s Event and Sales Support Manager, presents Austin Archer with the State Star in Agribusiness award for Austin’s outstanding achievement as a lawn care business owner.



Governor Bill Lee made history as the first sitting Tennessee governor to attend the State FFA Convention. Governor Lee addressed convention attendees during the 5th General Session.

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----- NEIGHBORLY ADVICE



By DeAnna Ottinger, Milligan University Assistant Professor of Occupational Therapy and Aliceson Bales, Physical Therapist

A 'pre-hab' perspective

How to keep farmers doing what they love... longer

Farmers are a tough, hardy lot, but they are also human. Many start their day with a cup of black coffee and medication to help deal with the various aches and pains that come as a result of their daily routines.

A common goal for farmers is to stay at it for as long as possible. Research shows the average age of farmers in America is 57.5 years, with one-third of farmers over 65 years of age — retirement age for many professions. Twenty-seven percent of farmers are “new” to agriculture, meaning they’ve been at it for less than a decade. Whether a person has been farming for five months or 50 years, agriculture can take a toll on a body.

An ounce of prevention

Healthy living today can mean a better quality of life in the future. If you could take steps now to avoid arthritis in the future, why wouldn't you? Arthritic conditions — extremely common among all walks of life, especially for farmers over the age of 60 — can be managed before symptoms begin to affect daily activities. Osteoarthritis, a common arthritis condition, is caused from the wearing down of joints, usually from overuse. Common sites for arthritis are hands, hips, and knees. Degeneration of the joints can result in needing replacements, which means surgery and time away from the farm.

Work smarter, not harder

Therapists call this energy conservation. Consider a full pitcher of water. The water represents the amount of energy you have for a given day. If you expend a great deal of energy in the morning unloading 50-lb. bags of feed by hand, you have poured out half of your pitcher of water. If you had backed up your truck and used a dolly or wheelbarrow to help unload the heavy bags, then you would have only used a fourth of your pitcher, leaving more energy remaining for the other tasks in the day.

Though you can lift those bags, it doesn't mean you should. Consider the following:

- Decide where you want your energy to go by alternating the hardest tasks with less difficult chores.
- Place a tall stool in the barn to provide a place to rest and off-load weight from your hips and knees while working.
- Keep tools and supplies in buckets so everything you need is in one convenient place.
- Use bigger muscle groups when possible.

For instance, rely on your whole palm to open a jar versus using a finger grasp.

No pain, no gain

Pain is the body's way of getting your attention. Pain and inflammation go together. When you feel pain, it's a sign you have inflammation in the joints where the pain is located. Words we hear as clinicians are stiffness,

swelling, and soreness, but they're all from the same source — inflammation. So pay attention to the pain! Use equipment to make your jobs easier throughout the day. That neck stiffness you feel from looking over your shoulder while baling hay is because your head is not made to look back for extended periods of time. Consider the following:

- Place mirrors thoughtfully on the tractor to help when backing and hooking up to equipment.
- Add handle extenders for brooms, mops, hoes, and rakes.
- Utilize stools or benches for kneeling, weeding the garden, milking, etc.
- Attach a step extension to decrease the step height to a tractor or other machinery.

These are just a few tips and tricks to help ease your workload and keep you farming longer, living the life you love.



Ag Tag breaks record on 25th birthday

Tennessee's Ag Tag license plate hit the streets 25 years ago, and thanks to citizens who support agriculture in this way, 2021 has been a record-breaking year.

For this fiscal year, sales of the specialty license plate raised \$487,000 to support Tennessee's farming community with a focus on agricultural development and youth. The Ag Tag became available in 1996, and since then, \$7.3 million has been gifted. Contributions include \$55,000 each year to FFA, 4-H, and the Governor's School for the Agricultural Sciences. Ag in the Classroom receives \$65,000 annually.

"The Ag Tag with its recognizable red barn is more than a symbol," Commissioner Charlie Hatcher, D.V.M. said. "The license plate has a real impact on agricultural programs for young people and for local farmers. When you put the Ag Tag on your vehicle, you are helping sustain agricultural and forestry development and leadership programs. The red barn conveys Tennessee's rural heritage and the value we place on farming families."

Programs to connect consumers with farm-direct products through farmers markets and restaurants that source local ingredients have also been launched with Ag Tag proceeds.

The Ag Tag idea was sparked by Tennessee Department of Agriculture staff members. "We wanted to recognize Tennessee's agriculture heroes and contribute to the ag community," Assistant Commissioner for Business Development Keith Harrison said. "That discussion resulted in the iconic red barn that inspired the Ag Tag and the Pick Tennessee Products logo," Harrison said. "It's rewarding to see after more than two decades that the Ag Tag supplies the next generation of farmers with valuable tools."

The specialty plate is available via the MyTN app or from your county clerk. A list of MyTN services and download information can be found at www.tn.gov/mytn.html. For just \$35 added to your county tag purchase or renewal, you can support farms and programs that strengthen Tennessee's rural economies. Your county clerk can exchange your current license plate for Tennessee's Ag Tag. Time remaining on any current registration will be credited to the new tag.



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Clint Bacon, left, and his brother, Brad work with their dad, Robert, who is not pictured, to carefully manage forages like Fria ryegrass, crabgrass, pearl millet, brown midrib (BMR) sorghum-sudangrass, triticale, and wheat, among others as part of their conservation efforts on the family's Morristown farm.



Rotational strategy

Bacon brothers depend on Fria ryegrass as a key component of pasture, hay

Story and photos by Glen Liford

A good beef farmer has to first be a good grass farmer. That philosophy drives the diversified farming operation of the Bacon family at their farm near Morristown.

Brothers Clint and Brad Bacon, along with their father, Robert, focus on a year-round pasture and hay strategy to keep their beef operation successful. It's a key part of the family's agricultural pursuits that also includes corn — mostly used to feed their cattle — and the soybeans they market for grain.

"You can sell corn if you want to," says Clint. "But it will make more money feeding it to the cows."

When traditional fescue pastures begin playing out in late summer, the Bacons enjoy the benefits of crabgrass in their fields. Once corn and soybean crops are harvested, the family relies on cover crops, including Fria ryegrass, crabgrass, pearl millet, brown midrib (BMR) sorghum-sudangrass, triticale, and wheat among others for conservation uses and also to provide early spring grazing and hay for their beef cattle.

The Bacons operate a stocker operation centered around roughly 700 calves. As a prime example of how their strategy works,

they cite a group of 59 calves purchased in late fall of 2019. From November to March, the brothers rotationally grazed the group on a series of paddocks over 40 acres consisting mainly of Fria ryegrass.

"We basically just kept them alive through the winter," Clint explains. "We gave them some 'come here' feed and kept them on limited grass and plenty of hay."

Shortly before turning them out on ryegrass in March, the Bacons worked the calves, including implanting some of them with Revalor[®]-S and some with Synovex[®]. The calves took to the Fria ryegrass, says

(See Fria ryegrass, page 20)



The Bacons manage a stocker operation that includes some 700 calves. They rotationally graze paddocks of Fria ryegrass for efficient gains.

Fria ryegrass

(continued from page 19)

Clint, averaging three pounds of gain per day over the 96 days they were kept on the pastures.

Bad weather was a contributing factor for slow early gains through the winter, he speculates, as well as the normal disruption calves experience when they are relocated to a new farm.

"It's always a challenge when you first buy calves," Clint explains. "Weaning, castrating, and working sets them back a month. They go through a funk. But I love that ryegrass."

Fria ryegrass is known for its outstanding yields and is an excellent choice for either grazing or hay, says Ben Gilbert, Green-Point Ag member service representative in East Tennessee. The forage is excellent for

overseeding and works well for use as a cover crop. It also boasts good cold tolerance.

"We recommend the forage be sown in August through October," says Ben. "Depending on the season, pastures will be ready for grazing sometime in early spring. It's a good fit for producers like the Bacons who are already managing their forages well."

The Bacons work with Smoky Mountain Farmers Cooperative in Morristown for precision ag services. They apply phosphorus (P) and potassium (K) using variable rate technology and then follow up with needed applications of nitrogen (N). The producers have utilized the Co-op for variable rate applications for about six years, and they are seeing the benefits.

"There is not as much variability in the ground now," says Clint. "The fields have tightened up. We know that from the soil tests."

Soil samples are typically pulled in a 2½-acre grid pattern, with adjustments for slope on the rolling ground of the farms, though they use zone sampling in some less critical areas.

Eddie Harville, manager of Smoky Mountain Farmers Co-op's Hamblen store, praises the Bacons' commitment to providing needed nutrients.

"They're not afraid to fertilize," he says. "Folks that don't fertilize need to remember that a crop removes a bunch of nutrients from the ground, and you have to put something back. The Bacons understand that well."

Their focus, Clint adds, is on investing for the future.

"It's just like livestock," he says. "You have to feed that crop, just like you would your cattle."



Smoky Mountain Farmers Cooperative Morristown branch store manager Eddie Harville, left, joins Brad and Clint to discuss the Bacon's operation. The brothers rely on the Co-op for precision ag services like variable rate fertilizer applications and soil sampling along with their other farm supplies.

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"Lt. Dan" and "Jenny," two of the three giraffe residents of Southland Safari in Clarksburg, are among the most popular of the 600 exotic animals living on the 125-acre property. The giraffes' neighbors include sloths, water buffalos, kangaroos, ostriches, zebras, a variety of antelope, and many other African and Asian species.

Tennessee savannah

Clarksburg's Chris and Tosha Gurley have opened Southland Safari to rave reviews

By Mark Johnson

As a late-afternoon thunderstorm rumbles off in the distance of the West Tennessee horizon, Clarksburg resident Chris Gurley sits in his idling farm truck on a hillside overlooking his property. Before him, livestock move across a rolling pasture, some grazing as they go while adolescents chase each other in playful groups.

"They're active this time of the day," Chris remarks. "They're feeling frisky."

It's a scene played out every day on hundreds of farms across the state by cattle,

sheep, goat, and equine producers and their animals.

But there's a slight difference in Chris' case.

He isn't looking at cattle or horses or goats; he's watching water buffalo, desert bighorn sheep, African bongo, Nubian ibex, kangaroos, nyla and impala antelope, Grant's zebra, and dozens of other exotic animals. Despite a large row crop operation directly across his fence, Chris' property resembles an African savannah as much as a Tennessee pasture.

"Pretty cool, isn't it?" Chris asks his guest, First Farmers Co-op Lexington store manager

Mark Montgomery, who is riding along. "This view never gets old."

Chris is owner of Southland Safari, Tennessee's only by-appointment, professionally guided safari experience. Some 600 animals of 52 different species roam across the 125-acre property in a variety of expansive high-fenced pastures, paddocks, and enclosures. A one-lane gravel road winds through the impeccably maintained property, which also features several picturesque ponds and lakes, wooded sections, and a neat-as-a-pin gift shop and welcome center. In a special enclosure near the shop, three majestic giraffes — "Forrest,"



“Jenny,” and “Lt. Dan” — peer at visitors from their 15-foot-tall vantage points. In an adjacent location, a three-toed sloth named “Sammy” lounges on a bamboo playset.

Although Southland opened just seven months ago to the public, Chris and his wife, Tosha, have been raising exotic animals on the property for more than a decade. Chris explains that the park is the result of a life-long fascination with zoological animals.

“From the time I first went to a zoo as a young kid, I was hooked,” says Chris, who was raised on a nearby goat and cattle farm. “In elementary school, I took every opportunity to write about, talk about, and draw pictures of exotic animals. I just love them.”

Chris’ fascination followed him into adulthood. After graduating college in 2002, he went to work for a national telecommunications company, but continued to research exotic animals in his spare time, hoping to eventually own a few. Fate intervened a year later when Chris noticed a newspaper classified advertisement for buffalo. After a few months of preparation and planning, he bought four.

(See Savannah, page 26)



Interacting with “Lt. Dan” and “Jenny” is part of the daily routine for (from left) Southland owners Tosha and Chris Gurley, and their children, Natalie, 8, Gage, 12, and Ridge, 5 (not pictured).



LEFT: While inspecting his pastures, Chris visits with three members of his ostrich flock. RIGHT: Visitors ride through the park in a converted 1996 GMC flatbed truck while tour guide Michael Avery provides information and anecdotes about the animals, including these American bison. (Photo courtesy of Jeremy Rasnik, Tennessee Drone Service.)

Savannah

(continued from page 25)

“My intention was just to raise buffalo as livestock, just like beef cattle,” he explains. “But soon after I bought them, I began meeting and talking with other people who raised exotic animals, and my little buffalo herd naturally began to expand into other species.”

By 2008, Chris was experimenting with breeding programs and growing his operation, but fate once again stepped in with a national economic recession and its resulting impact on the job market.

“All of a sudden, my company wanted to send me to work in downtown Memphis,” Chris recalls. “It was time to make one of those ‘life decisions.’ Against the advice of many of my friends and family, I decided to leave my job and put all my time and effort into this operation.”

His choice may have seemed unconventional at the time, but it turned out to be a good one. Over the next 13 years, Chris and wife Tosha would develop the operation into one of the leading breeders of zoological species in the southeast U.S., working closely with several regional zoos as well as nearby Tennessee Safari Park in Alamo, a drive-through-on-your-own animal park. Eventually, the Gurleys landed on a different concept — a high-end, family-friendly destination for animal enthusiasts, but with guided tours instead of a drive-through platform. They bought a 1996 GMC flatbed truck and converted it to comfortably seat 20 guests in padded chairs. They also decided to include a lodging option, and over the past year, have built four quaint, one-bedroom guest cabins located at a neighboring property. The cabin site also features a playground, a pond for fishing, and a large petting zoo.

“We were worried at first that this concept might not work in a little town like Clarksburg,” says Tosha, who quit her social work job last spring to help Chris run the park. “We opened in March and couldn’t have predicted the response. Before long, visitors were posting social media reviews and comparing us to the ‘Animal Kingdom’ safari at [Walt] Disney World, which was a huge compliment. Both the tours and the cabins pretty much stay full; it’s been amazing.”

Chris is quick to point out that the attraction would’ve been difficult — if not impossible — to create without the help of First Farmers Cooperative in Lexington.

“Our relationship with Co-op began about 10 years ago when I went looking for specialty 4 X 4 fence panels,” Chris says. “After months of frustration, I was put in touch with Mark

[Montgomery], and he handled the incredible amount of legwork it took to find what we needed. He could’ve just as easily said, ‘Sorry, we just can’t get them,’ but he didn’t. He stuck with it, and I’m forever grateful.”

Today, the Co-op provides not only fence panels for Southland, but also T-posts, coyote-prevention wire, a myriad of farm supplies, and approximately 10 tons per week of a custom zoological feed blended at the TFC Jackson Feed Mill.

Mark says that while Chris’ initial call came as a surprise, the Gurleys have become valued customers as well as friends.

“It’s been an inspiration to see this operation grow into what it is today,” Mark says. “I’m really pleased that we’ve been able to help with it.”

In addition to Chris and Tosha, the park employs four full-time staff members including longtime family friend Michael Avery, who serves as the main tour guide.

“I’ve been an animal enthusiast all my life, but this takes it up a notch,” says Michael with a laugh. “It’s not often that the average person gets to love on a kangaroo or hang out with a sloth, but that’s part of my daily routine!”

It’s not just the adults who have all the fun, either. The Gurley’s three children — Gage, 12; Natalie, 8; and Ridge, 5 — all pitch in where needed, helping to keep the gift shop swept clean, preparing apple, carrot, and

bamboo snacks for the animals, and caring for some of the petting zoo inhabitants. Gage points out that all animals are fascinating — even the “normal” ones.

“People like to talk about the giraffes and kangaroos and stuff, but I’m still amazed to see a horse or a pot-bellied pig,” he says with a broad smile. “They’re all amazing to me!”

Southland Safari is open to the public by appointment only. For reservations, visit www.southlandsafari.com or call 731-415-3812.



A Nubian ibex — one of many African antelope and goat species on the property — enjoys a high perspective from a pile of rocks.



From left, Chris and Southland tour guide Michael Avery visit with Mark Montgomery, Lexington store manager of First Farmers Cooperative, outside the park’s visitor center and gift shop.

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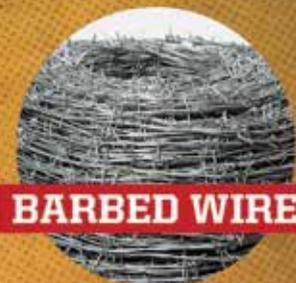
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Seventeenth Annual Tennessee Small Farmer Expo

The 2021 Tennessee Small Farmer Expo will take place Thursday, Sept. 2, at the Nashville Agricultural Research and Education Center (AREC) of Tennessee State University (TSU).

The AREC facility is home to the TSU meat goat research program, the TSU Community Garden, biofuels research, and other research and Extension programs.

The Small Farm Expo will highlight exhibitors, speakers, and field tour programs. Tours will provide participants with the opportunity to see research being performed in the areas of climate change, tomato pest management, meat goat production, organic agriculture, and alternative vegetable production.

This year's workshops will feature topics such as hemp production, alternative bean and grain production, container production, beekeeping, backyard poultry production, and public health.

Following the workshops, the "Tennessee Small Farmer of the Year Award" will be presented to identify and recognize exemplary efforts of small farmers throughout Tennessee. You may nominate one outstanding small farmer from your county for each of the four categories: Best Management Practices, Alternative Enterprises, Innovative Marketing, and Most Improved Beginning Small Farmer.

To register to attend the expo or nominate a small farmer for this year's awards, please contact Mr. Jason Foster at 615-963-1351 or jfoste44@tnstate.edu.



Scheduled for Thursday, Sept. 2, the 2021 Tennessee Small Farmer Expos will feature numerous vendors, speakers, and field-tour programs. The event will be held at Tennessee State University in Nashville.

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'The Great Comeback'

This summer marked the 98th annual Tennessee 4-H Roundup and All Star Conference. On July 19-23, students from across the state gathered on the campus of the University of Tennessee at Martin to receive recognition for their outstanding project work and leadership accomplishments, participate in service projects, and learn more about state university and career opportunities offered by the University of Tennessee.

This year's theme was "The Great Comeback," named to recognize one of the first in-person 4-H conferences since the onset of the pandemic. Students uncovered just a small amount of Tennessee 4-H's rich history, discussed the impact that 4-Her's can have in their communities, and elected a new State 4-H Council.

Front row, (sitting) left to right; Eleanor Israel, Williamson County, Sr. Representative; Taylor Cantrell, Dyer County, Sr. Representative; Jarrett Tubbs, Henderson County, Sr. Representative; Jim Jenkins, Hawkins County, State Council President; Issac Chandler, Anderson County, State Council Vice President; Leah Kennedy, Williamson County, Sr. Representative; Kaleb Hanna, Union County, Sr. Representative.

Back row (standing) Jamie Harris, State Specialist, and Advisor; Julie Crowe, Advisor; Shelby Calhoun, Madison County, Representative at Large; Katie Collins, Dickson County, Representative at Large; Delaney Turner, Macon County, Jr. Representative; Landon Brock, Loudon County, Jr. Representative; Mattie Smith, Meigs County, Jr. Representative; Hadley Brown, Sumner County, Jr. Representative; Alex Carpenter, Obion County, Jr. Representative; Reese Chandler, Weakley County, Jr. Representative; Anne Eddins, Knox County, All Star Chief; Grant Mainord, Putnam County, All Star Deputy Chief; Will Dalton, collegiate advisor; Hannah Tinch, Fentress County, All Star Scribe; Justin Crowe, State 4-H Director and Advisor.



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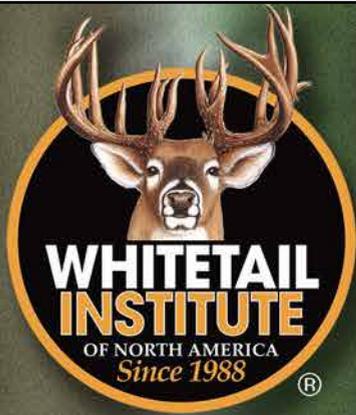
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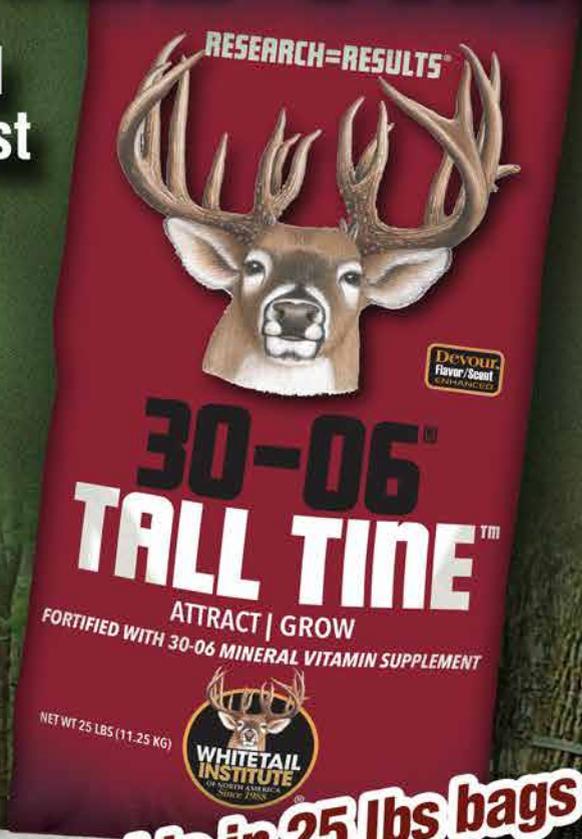


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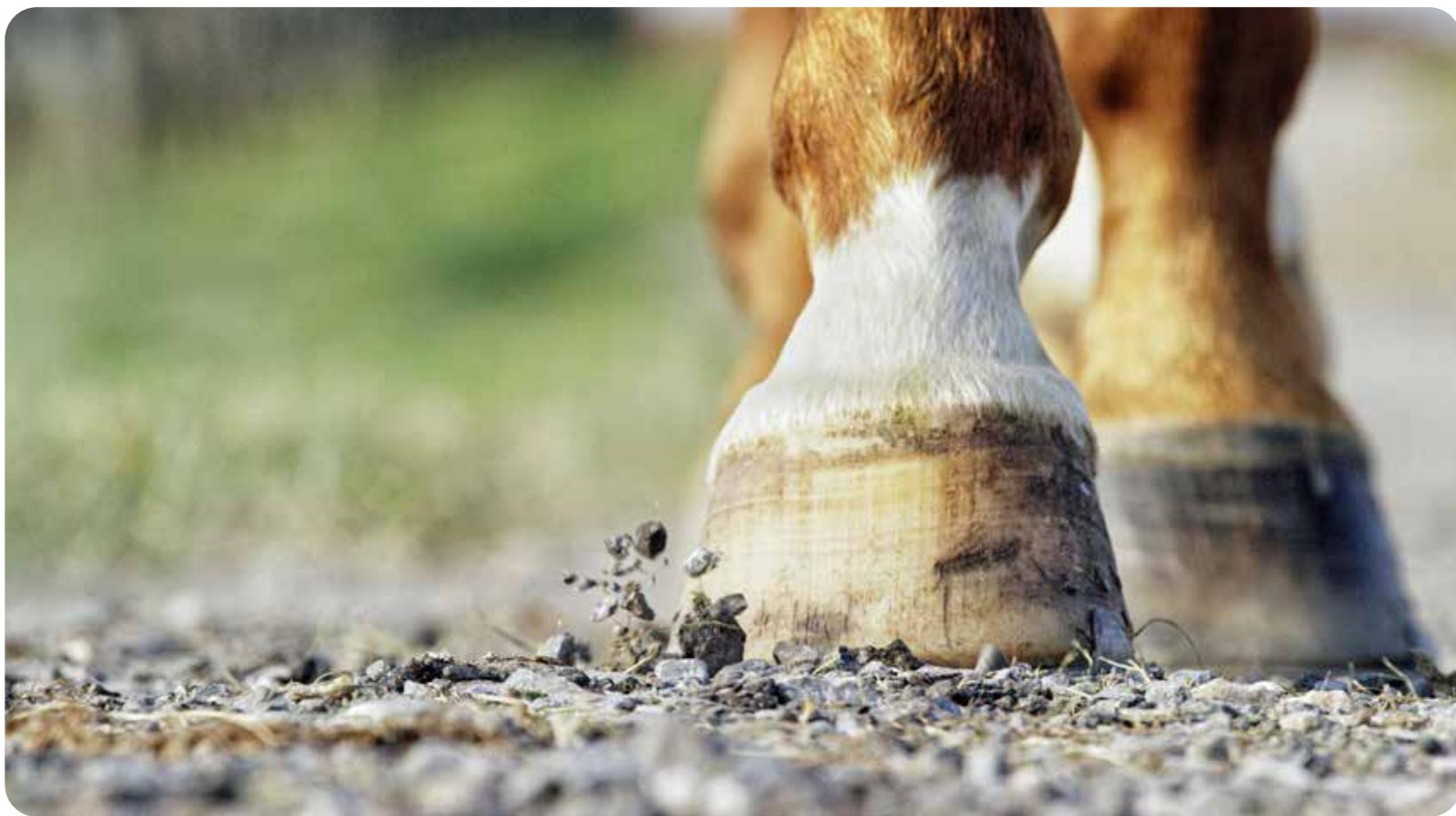
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Hoof care is essential to good equine health. Here are five practices to ensure your horse stays on solid ground when it comes to hoof care.

A firm foundation

Five summer hoof care tips

Story by Grey Parks, ProTriton Equine Specialist

Chips. Cracks. Lost shoes. Horse owners are likely all familiar with these common complaints. Summer can bring with it many hoof-care challenges. However, there are strategies that can be used to help keep your horse's hooves in tip-top shape all year round. Here are my five top tips for summer hoof care.

1. It all starts with a good trim

Excessively long and/or imbalanced hooves stress both the hoof wall itself and the structures inside the hoof, including the horse's skeleton. Whether the horse is barefoot or shod, the toe and heel of the hoof should be relatively short, and the angle of both should mirror the pastern angle. There shouldn't be noticeable "flares," or stretched-out areas along the hoof wall. When viewed from the sole, the hoof should be concave, with a tight white

line, wide heels, and a well-developed frog. While hind hooves should be more shovel-shaped or elongated than front hooves, the widest part of both should be just behind the apex, or point, of the frog.

The average horse requires a trim every four to eight weeks; some horses require more frequent trimming in the spring and summer and less in the winter, while others grow their hooves at a consistent rate throughout the year. Trimming frequency is especially important with "problem" hooves.

The goal is to trim the hoof often enough to keep its form as consistent and ideal as possible, rather than making big changes less frequently. If you can glance at a horse's hooves and notice that they need to be trimmed, you've probably waited too long. Talk to your farrier about what kind of schedule is best for your horse, based on its conformation, hoof quality, and rate of growth.

2. Hoof supplements: more than just biotin

Most horse owners are familiar with biotin and its importance to hoof health. Biotin is required for production of hoof keratin — a strong, fibrous protein forming the structure of hooves. Supplements containing at least 25 mg biotin per day have been proven to improve hoof and hair quality in many horses.

Did you know, though, that there are other nutrients that are equally important to hoof growth? The majority of adult horses get more than enough protein in their diet, but that protein is not always composed of an ideal amino acid balance. This is most likely to be a problem for "easy keepers" — horses eating less than the recommended amount of a commercially balanced feed. Lysine and methionine are limiting amino acids needed in the formation of protein throughout the horse. Pinnacle Balancer (#336PE) is designed to ensure that these easy keeping horses

will receive the amino acids, vitamins, and minerals they require while ingesting minimal excess calories.

Mineral balances can also be an issue in equine diets. Soils (and forages) tend to be very high in iron, which means that many horses end up consuming much more iron than they require. Even though a large portion of the iron is probably not useable by the horse, the dietary imbalance that results leads to a copper and/or zinc deficiency. Copper and zinc in forage-based diets are usually already low. This kind of imbalance is often also reflected in the horse's hair coat — chronic skin conditions (rain rot and “scratches”), as well as dull, excessively sun-bleached coats, are commonly associated with copper deficiency.

Pinnacle Horse Mineral (#96633MA) has recently been re-formulated to reduce its iron content. This balanced mineral supplement can help improve the iron/copper/zinc ratio in its diet, especially for horses consuming little-to-no commercial feed. When adding a supplement, keep in mind that you will not see miraculous results overnight. It takes an average horse six to 12 months to grow a completely “new” hoof wall, so be patient!

3. Don't underestimate the importance of fly control

The concussion of kicking and stomping to dislodge flies can wreak havoc on hooves, especially on horses wearing shoes. This can increase chipping and cracking in barefoot horses and loosen shoes on shod horses. Protective gear, including masks, boots, and sheets, offers horses physical protection from most of these pests. However, be sure that this gear fits the horse properly and check regularly for any rubs or skin irritation that may develop over time. This gear is best used on horses turned out in relatively small, mostly cleared paddocks and pastures, as they may be rubbed or torn off in wooded areas.

Fly sprays offer short-term relief to horses and are best applied just prior to riding or working your horse. When using these products daily, be sure not to apply them just before a heavy rainfall or hosing/bathing your horse; this wastes the chemical and your dollars! There are also commercially available collars and leg bands, which contain insect repellants, available for pastured horses. Although many of these products are “all natural,” localized skin irritation and allergic reactions are always possible; horses should be examined regularly, especially when the bands are first applied.

Environmental management can also help control insect numbers. Reduce or eliminate potential breeding grounds for flies, including standing water and accumulated manure. While this is sometimes easier said than done, it does work quite well. Flying insects tend to avoid moving air; fans in stalls and shelters can help provide horses with comfortable locations to escape these pests. On some properties, fly predators — parasitic wasps that prey on fly larvae — can dramatically reduce on-farm fly populations. These tend to be most effective on relatively large farms or in locations without neighboring livestock, and insecticide use should be avoided on properties where fly predators are released.

4. A dry hoof is a healthy hoof

It is a common misconception among horse owners that chipped, cracked hooves are “too dry.” In fact, the problem is usually just the opposite. A dry, hard hoof is a healthy hoof. Excessive moisture weakens the hoof wall structure, causing crumbling hooves. In our climate, repeated wet/dry cycles from frequent bathing, overnight turnout, and summer thunderstorms can be particularly problematic and lead to hoof wall cracks. Instead of bathing after every workout or on hot afternoons, sponge the horse off instead. Keep horses with hoof issues inside or on dry footing when pastures are damp, such as after a storm or during

early morning dew hours. Minimize the use of hoof oils, dressings, and polishes.

5. Consider possible metabolic disorders

Shelly, crumbling hooves and chronic abscesses are common in horses suffering from metabolic disorders. These include Equine Metabolic Syndrome and Cushing's Disease. If left untreated, these conditions can result in laminitis. Early detection and intervention are critical. We often associate high sugar content with spring pastures, but summer pastures can be equally problematic, especially when the grass is stressed during summer drought conditions. If you suspect your horse might be suffering from a metabolic disorder, talk to your veterinarian about what type(s) of testing he or she recommends.

Finally, keep in mind that all horses are individuals. It may take trial and error to discover the best management routine for a specific horse. If you're struggling with hoof quality, talk with your farrier, veterinarian, and/or an equine nutritionist. In most cases, it takes a multi-pronged approach to improve poor hoof quality. Hopefully, these tips will help you keep your horses' hooves in excellent shape this summer and throughout the year. Be sure to visit your local Co-op location for all your equine and hoof care product needs!



It may take a multi-pronged approach to improve your animal's hoof quality. Don't hesitate to consult with your farrier, veterinarian, equine nutritionist, or the folks at your local Co-op as you develop management practices to keep your horse's hooves in good shape.

Animals In Focus



Many of you may have joined ProTriton Equine Specialist, Grey Parks, on Facebook for her countdown to the day that her new foal, FC Dunit At Last "Etta," arrived on May 19, 2021. Etta (above with her dam, SAS Arielle) attracted a lot of attention after keeping everyone waiting until day 379 of gestation, which is 39 days past the average. Despite all the social media drama Arielle stirred up during the wait, the foaling was uneventful, and both mother and daughter have been doing very well ever since.

— Photo by Carissa Lynn Photography and Grey Parks

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SAVE





MAGNIFICENT
Mac and Cheese

There's no wrong way to make macaroni and cheese. Check out our readers' favorite homemade mac and cheese recipes that are sure to excite everyone at your table!



Baked Mac & Cheese

Patty Buck

Jamestown

Fentress Farmers Co-op

1 (16 oz.) package elbow macaroni, cooked
 1 tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
 6 tbsp. unsalted butter
 ½ cup all-purpose flour
 3 cups whole milk
 1 cup heavy whipping cream
 4 cups shredded sharp cheddar
 2 cups shredded Gruyere
 4 tbsp. melted butter
 ½ cup parmesan cheese shredded
 1½ cups panko bread crumbs
 ¼ tsp. paprika
 Salt & pepper to taste
 Preheat oven to 350°. Light-

ly grease a large 3-4qt. baking dish and set aside. Combine the cheeses in a large bowl and set aside. Then cook macaroni 2 minutes shy of packaging instructions. Remove from heat, drain, and place in a large bowl. Drizzle olive oil over macaroni and stir to coat. Let cool and then melt butter in a deep saucepan over medium heat, whisk in flour continually for 1 minute until bubbly and golden brown. Gradually whisk in the milk and heavy cream until smooth. Continue whisking until you see bubbles on the surface, continue to cook for another 2 minutes. Whisk in desired amount of salt and pepper. Add 2 cups of shredded cheese and whisk until smooth. Add another 2 cups of shredded cheese and whisk until smooth. Sauce should be nice and thick. Stir in the macaroni until combined and coated with the cheese sauce.

Pour half of the mac and cheese into prepared baking dish, top with 2 cups shredded cheese and then the remaining macaroni and cheese. In small bowl, combine panko bread crumbs, parmesan cheese, melted butter and paprika. Lastly, sprinkle over top of macaroni and cheese and bake for 30 minutes at 350°.

Macaroni and Meatballs

Phyllis Lance

McMinnville

Warren Farmers Co-op

2 quarts water
 1 (12 oz.) package Velveta
 5 cups macaroni
 Garlic salt to taste
 1 lb. ground beef
 1½ quarts tomato juice
 Garlic salt to taste
 Salt and pepper

In large pot, bring salted water to a boil. Make small meatballs, salt and pepper meatballs. Drop into boiling water. Cook for about 5 minutes, add macaroni, stir so it doesn't stick to pan and is tender. Add tomato juice, cut up cheese and add to pan. Stir until melted. More tomato juice can be added if needed.

Macaroni and Cheese Hot Dish

Sarah A. Greenwood

Hixson

Coffee Farmers Co-op

1 lb. ground beef
 1 14.5-oz. can tomatoes
 1 medium onion, chopped
 2 tsp. sugar
 2 tbsp. ketchup

1½ cup macaroni; cooked & drained
 Salt & pepper to taste
 Brown beef, onion, salt, pepper. Pour all ingredients together. Add 2 tsp. sugar to mix along with 2 tbsp. ketchup. Simmer for 30 minutes.

Grandmother's Macaroni and Cheese

Teresa Vinson

Union City

Obion Farmers Co-op

2 quarts water
 2 cups elbow macaroni
 2 tbsp. olive oil
 1 tsp. salt
 2 tbsp. butter
 1lb. Velveta Cheese, cut in chunks

In a large saucepan, bring water, salt, and olive oil to a boil. Add 2 cups elbow macaroni. Stir and cook until tender, approximately 10 minutes. Drain all of the water, reserving 1 cup. Add the 1 cup of reserved water, Velveta cheese, butter, and evaporated milk. Return to heat and cook until cheese is melted.

Crock-Pot Mac and Cheese

Nancy Darnell

Coldwater, Mississippi

DeSoto Farmers Co-op

2 cups uncooked elbow macaroni
 4 tbsp. butter
 2½ cups grated sharp cheddar cheese
 ½ cup sour cream

1 (10.75 oz.) can condensed cheddar cheese soup
 ½ tsp. salt
 1 cup milk
 ½ tsp. dry mustard
 ½ tsp. black pepper
 Spray Crock-Pot with non-stick cooking spray. Boil the macaroni in water for six minutes and drain. Mix butter and cheese over medium-high heat in a saucepan. Stir until the mixture melts. In your Crock-Pot, combine the cheese mixture, sour cream, soup, salt, milk, mustard, and pepper. Add the drained macaroni and stir. Cook in the Crock-Pot for 2 to 2 ½ hours on low heat, stirring every half hour. Cook just until it's hot. Don't overcook or your macaroni will turn to mush!

Macaroni and Cheese Deluxe

Jo Ann Hughes

Tompkinsville, Kentucky

Macon Trousdale Farmers Co-op

1 (8 oz.) pkg. elbow macaroni
 2 cups cream-style cottage cheese
 1 (8 oz.) carton sour cream
 1 egg, slightly beaten
 ¾ tsp. salt
 2 cups shredded sharp cheddar cheese
 Dash of paprika
 Dash of pepper

Cook macaroni according to package directions and drain. Rinse macaroni and set aside. Combine next 6 ingredients. Add macaroni and stir well. Spoon mixture into a lightly greased 2-quart casserole dish. Sprinkle with paprika and bake at 350° degrees for 45 minutes. Yields 6 to 8 servings.

Cocoa in December

Nothing is better on a cold winter day than a delicious cup of hot cocoa or a warm cocoa themed dish. Help us celebrate National Cocoa Day on December 13 by submitting your favorite cocoa-themed recipes! The day is to celebrate the richness of cocoa and its different recipes.

Help us gather cocoa themed recipes that are sure to have people indulging with this versatile ingredient all throughout the holiday season! The person submitting the recipe judged best will be named

“Cook of the Month” for the December 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, October 25, is the deadline cocoa 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



308th in a series to show where our rural Co-op friends worship

Mountain View Church of Christ in Hardin County

Mountain View Church of Christ is a small body of believers established in Hardin County and led by Minister Joe Paul Bryant. As a doctrine, the church is firmly founded in the teachings of the New Testament and seeks to return to simple New Testament Christianity where all believers are united. Become a part of this mission by joining them on Sunday mornings at 10:00 a.m. for Sunday School and 11:00 a.m. for worship. Evening services are held on Sundays at 6:00 p.m. and Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m. The church also invites people to take advantage of their in-home Bible studies and Bible correspondence courses that they offer.



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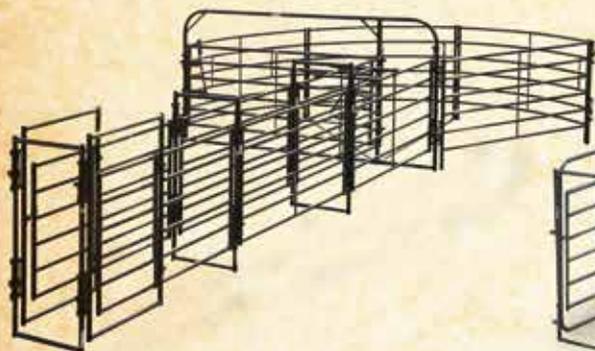


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Following the Footsteps

The 2021 Tennessee FFA Star Farmer award recipient, Jacob Bell, carries on the farming legacy of his grandfather while building a name for himself

Story and photos by Cara Moore

“I’m confident I’m leaving the farm in good hands.”

These are the words of Tom Bell Sr., a proud grandfather who has watched his 19-year-old grandson, Jacob Bell, grow to be a capable and skilled overseer of the family cattle and crop business.

As a fifth-generation farmer, Jacob is committed to preserving the legacy of the century farm that his predecessors built before him. The Bell Farm was originally founded in 1906 by Jacob’s second great-grandfather, Robert Alexander Bell Sr., in the rural town of Friendship, Tenn., just eight miles southeast of Dyersburg. Jacob’s grandfather, Tom Bell Sr., brought the first registered Red Angus cattle to West Tennessee in 1996 and gave Jacob his first calf when he was only 6.

This simple gesture sparked a love for livestock in Jacob that turned a farm hobby into his desired career. As a man of many talents, Jacob proved to be a promising football player as team captain of the Dyersburg High School team, even competing in the West Tennessee All-Star Football Game. However, when faced with the choice of what passion to pursue, Jacob determined to let go of football and fully invest himself in his family’s farm.

Jacob is currently one-fourth owner of Bell Farms and plays a large role in the upkeep of the operation. From clipping the show calves to formulating diets to raising crops, Jacob stays busy on the farm.

“Everything just fell into place for me to be able to work on the farm,” he says. “My granddad was practically a legend when it came to showing Holsteins, and I’m just trying to follow in his footsteps the best I can.”

One calf in 2007 has since become more than 20, and Jacob is eager to keep multiplying this number as his business grows. He and his family show their registered Red Angus cattle across the country, taking home numerous championship titles due to their cattle’s superior genetic merit.

“Between my freshman and senior year of high school, I added about 25 head of high-quality calves,” says Jacob. “That’s my pride and joy — getting some valuable animals in the show ring and in the donor pen as well.”

Although Jacob has many responsibilities around the farm, his primary focus is on purchasing high-quality females to improve the herd’s genetics through artificial insemination (AI) and embryo transfer.

“Right now, I’m learning how to AI and breed for the best genetics,” he explains. “I make the call on embryo transplants in my own calves, and at the moment, we’ve got 15 embryos in. I especially enjoy showing cows to market my own genetics.”

Jacob’s diligent and successful work in the livestock industry led him to be selected as this year’s State Star Farmer at the 93rd Tennessee FFA State Convention. The award is given to the top applicant for the State FFA Degree who has conducted an outstanding supervised agricultural experience (SAE) program in production agriculture, and with active participation in the FFA during their time in the organization.

Jacob’s SAE focused on beef production entrepreneurship, and positioned his registered Red Angus herd as one of the best in the state. Along with this esteemed award came the honor of participating in the Tennessee FFA Foundation Star Tour with four other State Star award recipients. with four other Star award recipients. They embarked on a week-long tour of Tennessee agribusi-

nesses across the state to showcase their SAE’s to other industry leaders.

“FFA has allowed me to meet people I’d never otherwise get a chance to meet — even people I’d never expect to be involved in agriculture,” says Jacob. “My favorite part of the job is meeting new people in the industry.”

As a young man still in the early stages of his career, Jacob has learned that being a generational farmer is more than just doing exactly what your family has always done; it’s about following in your predecessors’ footsteps while blazing your own path.

Jacob is currently a sophomore at the University of Tennessee at Martin working towards a degree in Agriculture Production. Although he says that he would love to have a career as a Bovine Reproduction Specialist, the experience Jacob has gained over the years on his farm has set him up to be successful in whatever area of the beef industry he chooses to pursue.

Jacob is quick to point out that his family is a large contributor to his success, and there is no shortage of teamwork when it comes to running the farm.

“I’ve been blessed with a great family that has raised me to handle livestock, and not everyone gets that opportunity,” he says. “I couldn’t do it without them.”



Jacob’s agricultural roots run deep through five generations of farmers before him. With Jacob above are grandparents Tom Sr. and Helen Bell, left, and father Tom Bell Jr.



“My ears are always open to what other people have to say — there’s always someone bigger and better to learn from and we have to stay humble to that. That’s practically my motto.” — Jacob Bell

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