

THE COOPERATOR

FEBRUARY 2022

CONNECTING THE **CO-OP** COMMUNITY

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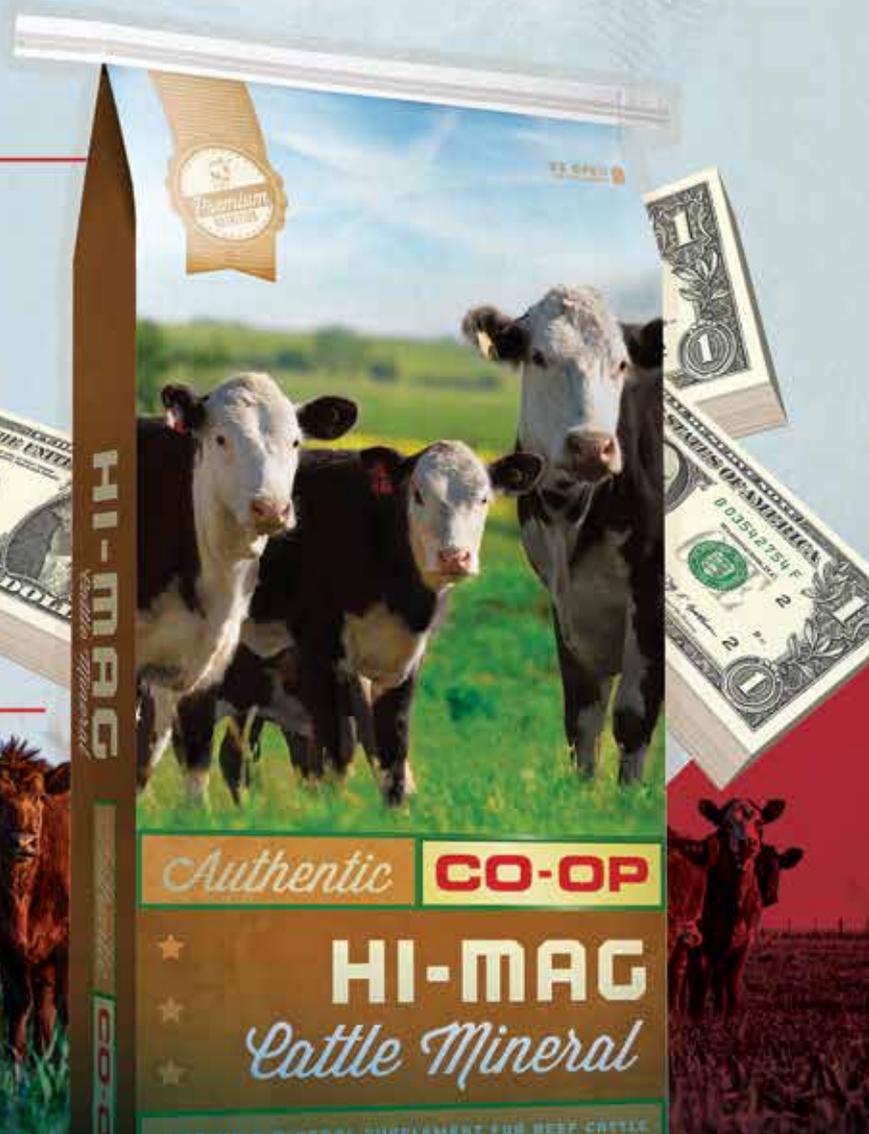
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February 2022 Volume 63, Number 2

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.

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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:

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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.

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Historical nuggets

Markers recognize state's rich hidden history



Glen Liford

Editor

As you travel Tennessee highways and backroads, there's always something new to discover. You never know what might be waiting around the next curve or over the next hill. Our state is diverse and offers more than its share of majestic views, scenic beauty, and many roadside oddities. For years, I've enjoyed spotting the distinctive Tennessee historical markers that are scattered from Memphis to Mountain City. I like to stop and read them if I have time, and many have served as the catalyst for more in-depth stories.

These markers have been installed by the Tennessee Historical Commission since 1946. There are now more than 2,000 of them across the state to commemorate important moments — some widely known, others more obscure — in our state's history. Some recognize historically significant churches, cemeteries, and towns. Others memorialize war heroes, politicians, and plain folk. They're devoted to recognizing our shared experiences, and these historical nuggets are both entertaining and educational.

Here are just a few notables that offer surprising glimpses of little-known historical facts:

- Find Marker 3A166 near Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro and you will learn about the Geographic Center of Tennessee, which is actually about a ½ mile northeast of the marker on Old Lascassas Road and is designated by an obelisk placed by the Rutherford County Historical Society.

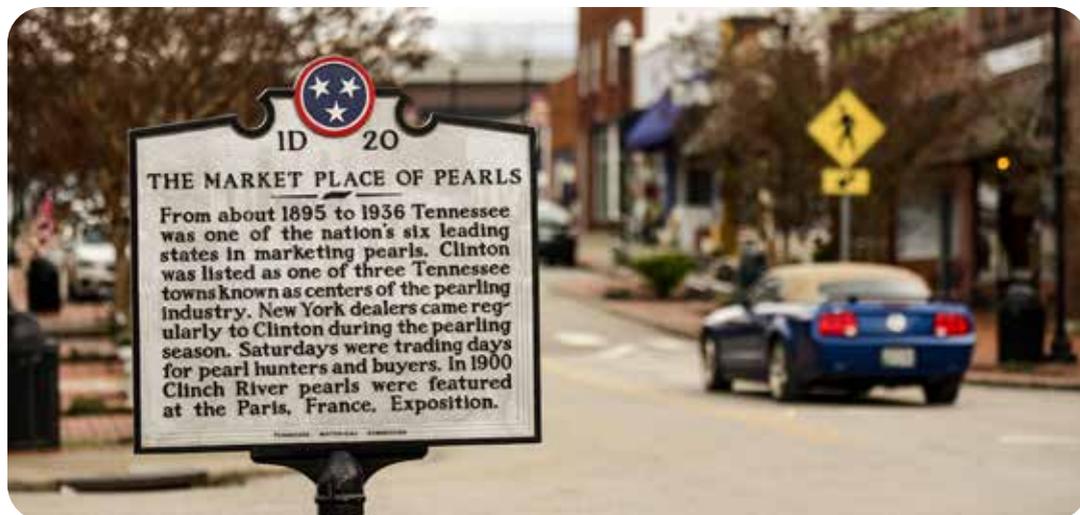
- Marker 1B19 near Rogersville was placed to note the burial spot of pioneer Hezekiah Hamblen who arrived in the area in 1788 and died in 1855. He was a surveyor who became a prominent magistrate. Hamblen County was named for him.

- Marker 1F18 at Tellico Plains commemorates the tiny town's history in gold mining. Gold was discovered at Coker Creek in 1831.

- In Jackson, you can find Marker 4D60, which honors Monroe Dunaway Anderson, known as the "father" of the Texas Medical Center in Houston, Texas. Anderson was born in Madison County and educated in the Jackson City Schools and nearby Union University.

- Marker 1A69 near Bristol recognizes the Jonesboro Turnpike where it crosses the highway. The thoroughfare was originally a branch of the Great War and Trading Path and became an important route from Virginia to the West. It is said Andrew Jackson traveled it on his way to Washington, D.C. for his first inauguration.

Only a few new markers are placed each year, according to the Tennessee Historical Commission website. However, a small number markers — around 20 per year — are funded by sponsors. You can find more information about the program at <https://www.tn.gov/historicalcommission/state-programs/historical-markers-program.html>.



This Tennessee historical marker on Main Street in Clinton highlights the town's important role in the pearl industry from 1895 to 1936. Tennessee was among the top six states in marketing pearls, and Clinton was one of three Tennessee towns acknowledged as centers of the thriving industry within the state.



Severe weather forever changed the landscape of communities in Tennessee and Kentucky on Dec. 10-11. Keith Kemp, a member of Weakley Farmers Co-op, lost his home, barn, and farm equipment to the tornado that touched down in Dresden.

Path of Destruction

Tornadoes wreak havoc on Tennessee, Kentucky residents Dec. 10-11

Story and photos by Claire Hill

High winds, pelting rain, and multiple tornadoes left a path of destruction across West Tennessee and Kentucky on Dec. 10-11, claiming five lives in Tennessee, 77 in Kentucky, and destroying most of the town of Mayfield, Ky.

Farmers throughout the areas were among those affected by the catastrophic storm. Many lost equipment, silos, shops, sheds, livestock, and fences. Business and homeowners lost their homes and livelihoods.

The storm left more than 150,000 Tennesseans without power — some for days

after — and homes, farms, and businesses forever changed. Kenton, Dresden, Sharon, and Samburg were among the hardest-hit communities in Tennessee.

“This storm damage will affect our economy for years to come,” says Weakley Farmers Co-op General Manager Paul Wilson. “There are businesses in downtown Dresden that have already announced that they don’t plan to rebuild.”

With nine Tennessee counties experiencing severe storm damage, federal aid was granted to Weakley, Lake, Stewart, Obion, Gibson, Dyer, Dickson, Decatur, and Cheatham counties, for funding reim-

bursement for emergency measures taken in response to the disaster.

“We have stepped up to help our neighbors and friends,” says Wilson. “Volunteer groups from all over the United States, including local groups, have come to provide daily needs like food, clothing, and items we take for granted. The groups are also donating their time to help clear debris and aid where needed.”

The path of the tornadoes veered from small towns to neighborhoods to farmland.

(See Path of Destruction, page 6)

Path of Destruction

(continued from page 5)

Weakley Farmers Co-op Board President Kenny Caldwell's father, Gerald, lives in a Dresden neighborhood. Surrounding homes were leveled, and Gerald's home had limited damage to roofing shingles as well as some broken windows. Gerald is a past member of the Tennessee Farmers Co-operative board of directors.

"It's amazing how Gerald's house saw little damage, and homes 20 feet from him were demolished," says Wilson. "You can see the path of the tornado as it swept through our area by the tree stumps, snapped trees, debris, and destruction of buildings."

Pieces of metal, debris, and even photographs have been found hundreds of miles from the affected counties.

"I came across metal roofing and siding in the field I was working in yesterday," says Weakley Farmers Co-op Applicator Austin Lee. "People have been finding debris and personal effects miles from their homes."

Lee, a resident of Sharon, was one of the many people who lost their homes in the damaging storm.

"I was at home when the shed came through the wall and a 2" by 6" [board] went underneath the couch cushion that I was laying on," Lee recalls. "I flipped the couch cushions on top of me on the floor to protect myself as best I could. The storm didn't last five minutes, but it was extremely windy after that. As it was dark, I didn't know the extent of the damage until the next day. My windshield is broken on my vehicle as well, but overall, I was blessed to have made it through the disaster."

Lee says the 15-acre wooded area surrounding his home is now nothing but stumps.

Tractors, combines, trailers, sprayers, and applicators were torn from equipment sheds. Miles of farm fences need repair, barns lay flat, and hundreds of head of livestock were lost.

Dresden farmer Keith Kemp, a member of Weakley Farmers Co-op, lost his home, barn, and equipment shed. Kemp, a certified public accountant in Dresden, received a ride to his office from neighbor, Alexander Bynum, who also lost sheds and livestock, to take shelter from the storm that continued to rage into the morning hours of December 11.

"We have been helping clear debris, pack up the remainder of friends' belongings from their homes, and deliver meals

in Dresden," says Weakley Farmers Co-op Marketing Manager Rhonda McDaniel. "It's rewarding to help people I've known my whole life, but at the same time, heart-wrenching as they've lost everything in almost a blink of the eye."

Among the farmers affected, Tennessee Farmers Cooperative (TFC) board member Amos Huey, a resident of Kenton, experienced severe damage to his farm. His daughter lost her home, but, he says, thankfully no family members were hurt.

Weakley Farmers Co-op has sponsored meals, donated equipment to help with debris cleanup, and provided personnel to help with disaster recovery. TFC is evaluating current needs to help with recovery efforts.

"Fleet of Angels, a nonprofit organization supporting equine rescue and recovery, called (Weakley Farmers Co-op) and wanted to help a member with equine purchases," says McDaniel. "The member lost three horses and their hay barn."

For more information regarding recovery resources, visit <https://www.cfmt.org/giving-and-investing/become-a-donor/give-to-a-fund/tennessee-farm-disaster-response-fund/>. Affected farmers can also apply for funding through the Tennessee Farm Bureau Disaster Fund at <https://cfmt.formstack.com/forms/farmbureau>.



The West Tennessee community of Dresden was one of the communities severely impacted by the tornadoes Dec. 10-11. This neighborhood, located off Highway 22, saw significant damage from the storm.

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Calves enrolled in the Vacc-60 Program, a preconditioning initiative created by Tennessee Farmers Cooperative and United Producers, Inc., will not only create more value for their producer, but also add value to the state's livestock industry.

A better path for calves

Tennessee Farmers Cooperative and United Producers, Inc.
launch Vacc-60 Program

Story by Cara Moore
Photos by Dale Bryson

Tennessee Farmers Cooperative (TFC) is proud to announce the launch of the Vacc-60 Program, a cooperative effort between TFC and United Producers, Inc. (UPI). The program is designed to prepare calves for the next phase of production by getting them accustomed to eating out of a bunk and by giving them vaccinations. Preconditioning practices drastically decrease the likelihood of sickness and disease, thereby increasing the value of the calves.

UPI, the Midwest's largest livestock marketing cooperative, was a valuable partner in the

development of the program and has recently assumed the business activities of Tennessee Livestock Producers, Inc. (TLP), which was a Farm Bureau service company. Since UPI's expansion to Tennessee in 2020, they have heightened their collaboration with TFC to broaden the cooperative's resources and reach.

"We're looking forward to what the future holds as we see TFC as a trusted resource in this state," says Darrell Ailshie, who served as project manager for UPI until early 2022. "Although the concept of preconditioning programs has been around for several years, the Vacc-60 Program seeks to popularize and expand the use of such practices."

As the demand for lower-risk, vaccinated, weaned cattle grow, Ailshie predicts

this type of cattle will set the market. The Vacc-60 Program will allow local producers to stay ahead of this curve, he says. The program is designed to benefit local beef producers, as well as member Co-ops and affiliated dealers, with TFC and UPI playing a support role.

The Vacc-60 Program is the initial phase of the new value-added production program for weaned calves. Protocol for this program includes management, animal health, and nutrition, as well as options for marketing, credit, and sale-price management.

"What we've put together is a top-shelf program with options that are not available elsewhere in the marketplace," says TFC Livestock Program Manager Dale Bryson. "Vacc-60 has

Vacc-60 PROGRAM

a lot of flexibility where each producer will have control of their program to ensure they get the most benefit.”

Detailed certifications and verifications are clearly defined by Vacc-60 and include a 60-day minimum weaning for home-raised calves or 60-day minimum ownership for purchased calves. Similar to other programs, male calves must be castrated and female calves must be guaranteed open.

Two forms of identity — including an 840 Electronic ID Reader (EID) tag and certificate of authenticity — accompany the calf to verify that it's part of the Vacc-60 Program. The 840 EID tag is an official United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) permanent identification tag, which gives the cattle credentials to be shipped anywhere in the United States. Calves will also be certified through the producer's verification of animal health practices.

As outlined in the Vacc-60 animal health protocol, all animal-health inputs must be purchased through an approved affiliate, which includes local Co-ops, and the specific vaccination program must be selected from one of eight programs to ensure cattle perform as expected. All programs are approved and supported by three major health suppliers — Zoetis, Boehringer Ingelheim, and Merck. Once cattle are enrolled, animal-health supplies can then be ordered from the distributor Alliance Animal Care by calling 1-844-4COW-VAX, and next-day shipment is available to most producers.

Because nutrition is the foundation of animal health, the Vacc-60 nutrition protocol places great importance on the nutritional criteria for feed and minerals that must be met for those participating in the program. The re-

quirements, which were consolidated through thorough testing from prominent feed manufacturers such as the Cooperative Research Farms and Purina Feeds, will result in the vaccinations being overall more effective. The producer will have flexibility in meeting the requirements, but local Co-ops and their representatives will be available to offer suggestions on products that will qualify. The parameters are set in place to produce high-quality cattle with a Body Condition Score (BCS) between 5 and 6.

Upon enrollment, producers will gain access to UPI's expertise in customized marketing solutions, and UPI will serve as the primary marketing resource for producers participating in the Vacc-60 marketing protocol. Data will be collected and shared among the cooperative system to discover marketing preferences, suggest alternatives, and assist in every possible way to ensure that cattle sell for their true value.

Credit opportunities will also be offered through UPI for those who choose to finance the initial purchase of feeder cattle, and consumables (feed and animal health products) can be financed through Cooperative Financial Solutions (CFS).

Bryson says that these tools benefit farmers tremendously by allowing them to estimate the production cost, the sale cost, and the sale price, and then put an overall budget together to eliminate remaining unknowns.

The last piece of the Vacc-60 Program is the option for sale-price risk management. UPI offers tools that can utilize contracts and/or options to produce a variety of sale-price optimization models for producers who are comfortable with those risk management options, including the option for forward contracting.

“As the pieces of the puzzle come together, we think that we are set for success with our partnership with TFC,” says Ailshie. “And ultimately, we hope to support the local county Co-ops and members who choose to participate. Beyond the benefit that local producers and Co-ops receive, the Vacc-60 Program ultimately boosts the reputation of our state's cattle.”

For a complete list of Vacc-60 protocol guidelines and more information about the program, reach out to your livestock specialist at your local Co-op.

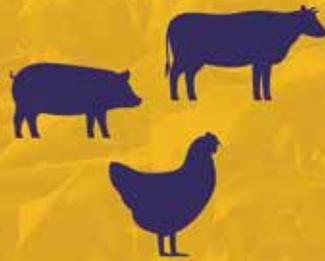


Producers enrolled in the Vacc-60 Program have flexibility in marketing their cattle anywhere or under any program they choose. However, they are encouraged to participate in organized sales through United Producers, Inc. (UPI) where UPI will be a promising buyer in the process.

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NATIONAL FFA WEEK

National FFA Week kicks off Feb. 19

Each year, FFA chapters around the country celebrate National FFA Week. It's a time to share what FFA is and the impact it has on members every day.

Nearly 735,000 FFA members across the country will celebrate the role agriculture plays in our daily lives while sharing the message of agricultural education as part of National FFA Week Feb. 19-26.

National FFA Week is a time for FFA members to host activities that raise awareness about the role FFA plays in the development of agriculture's future leaders and the importance of agricultural education. The National FFA Board of Directors designated the weeklong tradition, which began in 1948, to coincide with George Washington's birthday in recognition of his legacy as an agriculturist and farmer.

The annual "Goodwill Tour," where state FFA officers travel across Tennessee visiting different universities, high schools, and donor businesses to update members, alumni, and sponsors on the latest news in Tennessee FFA, will continue as long as there are no major changes in the state of the pandemic.

One topic that will be discussed on the state tour is that every student enrolled in an agricultural education course is also a member of Tennessee and National FFA, per the affiliation updates in July of 2020. Tennessee agriculture education students no longer have to pay individual dues to Tennessee FFA and National FFA. Involvement in FFA is an integral part of an agricultural education program and therefore should not be optional. This historic movement nearly doubled Tennessee FFA membership from 14,000 to almost 27,000 students.

During National FFA Week, chapters give back to their communities through service projects and recruit students to become FFA members. On Thursday, Feb. 24, the National FFA Foundation will celebrate "Give FFA Day," a daylong campaign encouraging the public to support various needs impacting FFA members. Donations made on Give FFA Day will support teacher resources, educational programs, leadership workshops, and official blue jackets.

For more information about National FFA Week, visit www.ffa.org/national-ffa-week. For more up-to-date information about the Tennessee FFA Goodwill Tour contact the Tennessee FFA Foundation at tnffaoundation@tnffa.org.

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Hereford Horned/Polled	12:30 p.m.	11:30 a.m.	Bobby Singleton	615-708-1034
Shorthorn	1:30 p.m.	1:00 p.m.	Mike Davis	615-202-7106
Angus	3:00 p.m.	1:00 p.m.	Kenneth Armstrong	931-703-6661
Charolais	3:00 p.m.	2:00 p.m.	Bob Morton	931-842-1234
AOB Show Heifer	NA	5:00 p.m.	Bobby Singleton	615-708-1034

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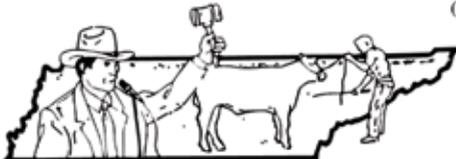
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NEIGHBORLY ADVICE



By John Houston, ProTriton Feeds director of business services

Chick raising essentials

A helpful guide for a fun family project

If you've visited a farm store lately to look for garden seeds or other spring supplies, you likely noticed the presence of young chicks. Whether or not you're a poultry lover, you can't help but stop to look at the busy little birds.

Raising young chicks is certainly an educational experience. Because of the small space requirement as opposed to other farm animals, chicks are an ideal family project. It only takes a little forethought to create a fun experience for the whole family.

Planning for the arrival of new chicks is extremely important. As with any young animal, proper care and nutrition are the foundation for a healthy adult. Start a few weeks before the chicks arrive so there is plenty of time to get things ready.

Begin by preparing a clean, dry area that is well ventilated, but free from drafts. If you plan on using an older building, spend some time clearing dust and cobwebs and disinfecting the area with a standard household cleaner. Allow the area to dry, then bed with dry pine shavings.

You will also need to prepare the brooder area, which will require a heat lamp with a 250-watt infrared bulb and a "brooder ring." The brooder ring is used to keep the chicks near the heat source — anything from corrugated cardboard to a kiddie pool can be used successfully. The heat lamp should be positioned such that the temperature at chick level (2-3 inches above litter) is 95°F. Over time, adjust the height of the heat lamp to reduce the brooder temperature by 5°F per week until 70°F is reached. Monitor the chicks' behavior, as they will tell you whether they're comfortable. If conditions are too chilly, chicks will pile up on each other to keep warm; if it's too hot, they will move far from the heat source. After 7-10 days, the brooder ring can be removed, but the heat lamp should remain.

While you're in cleaning mode, clean and disinfect feeders and waterers. A solution of 1 tablespoon chlorine bleach per gallon of water works well as a disinfectant. If you do not have feeding equipment, consider purchasing it

rather than utilizing old bowls or tubs. Young chicks can easily drown in shallow water, and chick feeders are designed to reduce fecal contamination as much as possible. As a rule, use two quart-sized waterers and 48 inches of double-sided feeder space per 100 chicks. As the chicks grow, their space requirements will increase, so replace the small waterers with gallon-sized ones and plan for three linear inches of feed space per bird.

Nutrition plays a vital role in the health and growth of young birds. Always provide access to clean, fresh water. This often means changing the soiled water multiple times per day. Chicks should be started on a crumble or mash feed that has been formulated specifically to meet their nutritional needs. A chick starter feed should contain 18 to 22 percent protein, be relatively high in energy, and include an appropriate balance of amino

acids, vitamins, and minerals. Co-op All-Natural Chick Starter (#104) is a suitable product for the first several weeks of a chick's life. Do not supplement the diet with additional corn, wheat, or other grains as these additions can create dietary imbalance and retard growth during the early development live stage. New baby chicks often need to be coaxed into eating, so place some crumbles on paper so that the chicks can easily see the feed. Once they begin eating out of the feeder, the plates can be removed. At approximately 20 weeks of age, pullets should be introduced to an appropriate layer feed.

The daily management of keeping chicks clean, dry, and well-fed takes a lot of work and attention. If you decide to raise chicks this spring, visit your local Co-op for all your supply needs and advice to help with getting off to a good start!





GREENPOINT AG

Prepare now for a high yield wheat crop

By Taylor Dill,
GreenPoint Ag Agronomist

Take time in February to assess tiller counts

Tiller counts and efficient nitrogen management are the cornerstones of a high-yield wheat crop.

Wheat tillers are additional stems coming off from the main shoot of each wheat seed. Each tiller produces an additional seed head. The number of tillers you have is a good indicator of what kind of yields you can expect. It is recommended to have 80 to 100 tillers per square foot. For broadcast wheat, simply count the number of tillers in one square foot, and for drilled wheat, the distance measured will be determined by your row width. For a 7.5-inch drill, which is recommended for wheat grain production, the distance needed to count tillers is 19.2 inches.

Fall tillers are most important but assess tiller counts now to know whether to split your nitrogen and add tillers before jointing. When jointing — the term used when the growing point of the wheat comes above the soil line — occurs, no more addi-

tional tillers will be added, and the number of harvestable heads will be set.

If the tiller counts are lacking, opt to split your nitrogen, increase your tiller counts, and yield potential. I have seen this split nitrogen shot save wheat crops and make outstanding yields where the grower was contemplating terminating instead. There is no need to go over 30 units of nitrogen with this split as it's a small window that's being addressed. There is usually some opportunity this time of year where the ground will hold up to a sprayer and hopefully farmers can take advantage of 40 or higher degree temperature days allowing the wheat to take up the nitrogen.

Any nitrogen source can be applied, but typically liquid is used for plant availability and uptake. Preferably 28-0-0-5 is the liquid nitrogen source used where sulfur is key and taken up and used in similar timings to nitrogen. Also, using liquid allows the option of the tank mixing some herbicides and controlling

weeds at the same time by cutting the nitrogen solution half with water. Typically, 15-20 gallons per acre is applied, and if half of that volume is nitrogen (7.5-10 gallons) using 28-0-0-5 comes out to 23-31 units of nitrogen.

If tiller counts are sufficient, you might opt to save that trip across the field or application cost and put out nitrogen in one shot around jointing. Splitting nitrogen is never a bad idea, but not always necessary with enough tillers. Split applications of nitrogen are a more efficient use of nitrogen, putting less out at one time versus one big shot where the risk of loss can be high, and running out of nitrogen during grain fill is a possibility. Also, splitting nitrogen can grant you a wider application window at jointing where it is critical to not be deficient because that is when the size of the wheat head will be determined.

If you are interested in crop management, nitrogen fertilization, or in determining your tiller counts for your wheat crop, contact the experts at your local Co-op.

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Shifting focus

Spring Hill cattle farmer, Randy Lochridge, uses Tennessee Agricultural Enhancement Program option to improve herd genetics

The Tennessee Agricultural Enhancement program received over 7,730 applications in 2021 including those from cattlemen like Spring Hill's Randy Lochridge, who was one of the applicants interested in the genetics program.

Story by Allison Farley
Photos by Mark Johnson

Spring Hill's Randy Lochridge, a fifth-generation cattleman and row-crop farmer, is grateful for the Tennessee Agricultural Enhancement Program (TAEP) and the incentives that have helped his operation become more efficient and profitable. Since its establishment in 2005, the popular Tennessee Department of Agriculture (TDA) initiative has offered farmers cost-share incentives to make operational improvements that would be difficult for many to afford otherwise.

TAEP received over 7,730 applications in 2021, with the top three programs requested being livestock equipment, hay equipment, and genetics. Lochridge was one of the applicants interested in the genetics program.

"I have enrolled in the genetics program, and I am using it to try to introduce a fresh and wider range of bloodlines to my herd," says Lochridge. "I've already purchased two bulls

and plan on submitting those as cost share purchases. TAEP is a worthwhile program, and I can't say enough good things about it."

The Lochridge farm consists of a cow/calf operation with around 70 cows, hay production, and a small acreage of soybeans. He started farming with his father, James, after completing his studies in agriculture at the University of Tennessee in the early '80s.

"I farmed with my dad for six years after college, and then the Spring Hill area began to boom with the announcement of the General Motors plant to be built," says Lochridge, a longtime member of United Farm and Home Co-op. "I felt like I needed to look at other income sources for a career, so I went to work for the Agricultural Stabilization Service, which is now the Farm Service Agency. I had a small tobacco operation and I always raised cattle — and still do."

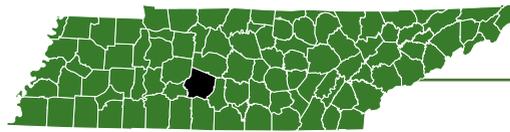
In the early years of the TAEP program, Lochridge primarily relied on the cost-share

incentives to help upgrade working facilities for his livestock.

"As my herd has grown, my facilities needed to be updated for safety purposes," he says. "I was trying to reduce the stress on the animals and workers, and hopefully increase safety as working cattle can be dangerous. This year, I felt the time was right to use TAEP for genetics."

The TAEP Herd Genetic Program has been a part of 16,304 projects since its beginnings in 2005, with \$17,816,062 given back to farmers in reimbursements for cattle, goats, and sheep. The program works to assist producers in improving the genetics of their operations, while also increasing the quality, value, marketability, and reputation of Tennessee livestock.

The cattle portion of the program requires a Beef Quality Assurance Certification and rewards farmers who participate in the Master Beef, Dairy, Farm Manager, and Farm Family Health and Wellness



LEFT: Lochridge is able to produce his own hay to feed his 70 cows. RIGHT: The third generation United Farm and Home member enrolled in the genetics program to introduce a fresh and wider range of bloodlines to his into his herd. He hopes to decrease the birth weights of his calves to help first-time mothers have a more successful labor and delivery process.

programs, with a larger presentation of cost-share.

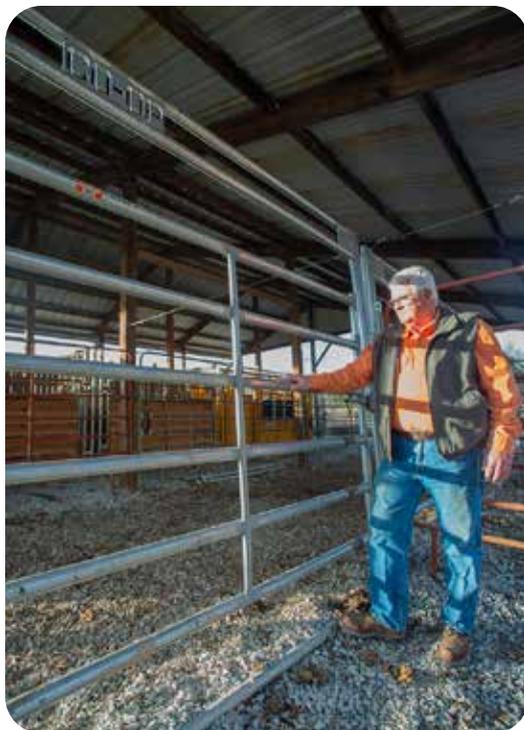
“Working through the Master Beef program with UT Extension is good training,” says Lochridge. “With the way things change in the agricultural industry, you’ve got to continue to grow and expand your knowledge and try to figure out which techniques or technologies are suitable for your operation and can benefit you.”

UT Extension has recently made training even more accessible in light of the COVID-19 pandemic by offering online courses through the local offices.

“I’m taking the classes online this year because of the pandemic, which is a new option that they’ve added,” says Lochridge. “It’s been a blessing for me as a part-time farmer with a full-time job to take the classes when they fit my schedule, and I applaud UT Extension for that.”

The TDA has already announced the continuation of this program in 2022 with the application deadline set for October 1-7, 2022.

“I really appreciate that our state legislators, as well as the Department of Agriculture, continues to support and fund this program,” says Lochridge. “It reassures me that they understand the importance of agriculture in Tennessee.”



For the last several years Lochridge primarily relied on TAEF incentives and United Farm and Home Co-op to upgrade his livestock facilities and make them safer for both the animals and the people working them.

Important info for participants

Producers should have received reimbursement packets from their 2021 TAEF application by now. Producers are encouraged to make their purchases early so they can submit reimbursement requests by the deadlines. Your local Co-op is ready to help you with your purchasing decisions.



TAEF deadlines:

Decline Funding Deadline - Hay Equipment & Livestock Equipment

March 1, 2022

Reimbursement Request Deadline - Hay Equipment & Livestock Equipment

April 1, 2022

Decline Funding Deadline - Genetics

May 1, 2022

Reimbursement Request Deadline - Genetics

June 1, 2022

Decline Funding Deadline - Dairy Solutions, Herd Health, Livestock Solutions, Permanent Working Structures, Row Crop Solutions, Poultry Grower, Producer Diversification

July 1, 2022

Reimbursement Request Deadline - Dairy Solutions, Herd Health, Livestock Solutions, Permanent Working Structures, Row Crop Solutions, Poultry Grower, Producer Diversification

August 1, 2022

The application deadline for 2022 will be October 1-7. If you are interested in applying or want to learn more, visit www.tn.gov/agriculture/farms/taep.

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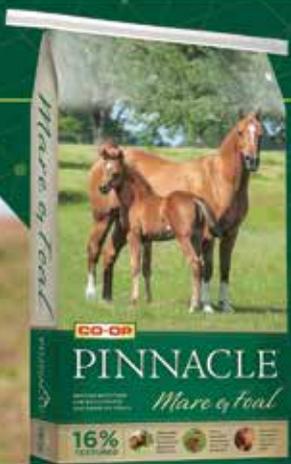
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Launched in 1964, the National Corn Yield Contest continues to push innovation in corn production to heights once considered unreachable. Originally boasting 20 entrants, the contest attracted more than 4,000 in 2021, with winners ranging from large, corn-belt producers to farmers with less than a few hundred acres.

Proof of what can be

Tennessee growers learn valuable lessons through the National Corn Yield Contest

By Mark Johnson

Photos by Mark Johnson and Glen Liford

When the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) launched a friendly yield competition in 1964, 20 producers entered. Neither the organization nor those growers could've imagined how the little contest would grow.

In 2021, the National Corn Yield Contest (NCYC) attracted more than 4,000 growers and received 7,213 entries. While still a friendly competition, the contest has become a vehicle for both serious bragging rights and real-world corn production innovation.

"It's a valuable tool for our growers," says NCYC manager Linda Lambur. "While it's fun to have bragging rights over your friends and peers, the contest is really about helping our growers realize their potential."

By offering nine different production categories, the contest evens the playing field between large, corn-belt producers and small farms located in areas of the country that are not typically known for corn production. Each entrant must adhere to the same guidelines, and all harvests are overseen by an independent volunteer with a background in the ag industry.

"The acreage harvested, the planting date, the hybrid, and the tillage used is verified by this volunteer, called a 'supervisor,'" says Linda. "These supervisors take their role very

seriously and do a great job of providing an accurate picture of each entry."

Each entrant must grow at least 10 continuous acres of one corn hybrid, and they may choose that 10 acres from within a larger field. Yield numbers are determined from a minimum of 1.25 acres of shelled corn.

In 2021, the 27 national winners represented the top yields in each category pulled from the state winners. The national winners had verified yields averaging more than 376.7593 bushels per acre, compared to the projected national average of 177 bushels per acre.

Tennessee's 16 winners represented all three grand divisions of the state. Among these winners were Elora's Erin and Madison Reed, Taft's Kris and Kole Phillips, and Sweetwater's Josh Watson.



Sweetwater

Josh Watson

For Sweetwater row-crop producer Josh Watson, the idea of entering the NCYC came three years ago after he grew his own test plot to try out several hybrids.

“I just wanted to see what worked best in my area, and I grew some DEKALB corn that made over 300 bushels,” says Watson, who raised 1,400 combined acres of corn and soybeans in 2021. “The county agent who was doing the weighing was amazed — and so was I — but it was just a 600-foot strip. That gave me the thought to consider entering the NCYC.”

In a stroke of bad luck, the Sweetwater area suffered through severe drought conditions the following year, so Watson put his contest plans on hold.

“When the contest came back around in 2021, I decided to give it another shot,” says Watson, a customer of both Knox Farmers Cooperative and AgCentral Cooperative. “To put it simply, I was blessed. We received the perfect amount of rain, week after week, and the weather stayed cool. It just couldn’t have gone any better.”

After planting on April 15, Watson began carefully managing the 20-acre plot, including an initial application of 200 units of nitrogen, two applications of 32% UAN, multiple fungicide treatments, and regular tissue sampling.

“It was a creek-bottom field with good, strong dirt,” he says. “We planted the corn at a



Sweetwater farmer Josh Watson entered the NCYC after achieving a 300-bushel-per-acre harvest in his own test plot three years ago. Watson’s 2021 entry of 342 bushels took 1st Place in the Conventional Non-Irrigated category and 3rd Place nationally.

34,000 population and got an even emergence, so from the beginning, we knew we had something special.”

NCYC rules state that if a harvest yields better than 325 bushels, the field must be rechecked using the same harvest pattern and a second supervisor. The second check is the one recorded by the NCYC. Watson says that by harvest, he felt sure the field would eclipse the 325-bushel mark.

“We had a second supervisor there just in case,” he says. “The first check was 330 and the second was 342.”

Watson’s entry went on to take 1st Place in the Conventional Non-Irrigated category in Tennessee and 3rd Place nationally. He credits Knox Farmers Co-op manager Lewis Jones for helping him with his row-crop production.

“Lewis has been a great asset for me,” he says. “You can’t really accomplish something like this without a lot of help. More than anyone, I credit the Good Lord for providing me with perfect weather and the willpower to get out of bed and go do the work every day.”



Elora



The NCYC is a family activity for Elora producers (from left) Eric, Erin, and Madison Reed. Madison, 18, is pursuing a degree in animal science from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville. The Reeds also have a 13-year-old son, Owen.

The Reed Family

Elora’s husband and wife team, Eric and Erin Reed, and their 18-year-old daughter, Madison, have been making waves in the NCYC since first entering in 2019. In that contest, Madison took the top Tennessee prize in the Conventional Non-Irrigated category. In 2020, Madison again took top honors in the same category, and in 2021, she took 3rd while her mother, Erin, won the Conventional Irrigated category for Tennessee. The Reeds grow 1,400 combined acres of corn, soybeans, and cotton, while Erin also operates a cotton gin,

a longtime business owned by her family.

“We stay pretty busy!” Erin laughs. “Between the farm and the gin, it’s pretty difficult to do anything else.”

Eric says the family became interested in the NCYC after hearing about it from friends.

“You would think it would all be about bragging rights, but [those] don’t pay the bills,” says the longtime member of Lincoln Farmers Co-op. “The contest involves a lot of time and effort, and we wouldn’t do it if we didn’t think we were getting something out of it. The simple

(See National Corn Yield Contest, page 24)

National Corn Yield Contest

(continued from page 23)

truth is, we learn a lot from our contest fields that we use in our production acres. Since participating in the NCYC, our overall yield average has improved by 74 bushels an acre.”

He attributes these substantial gains to both technology and attitude.

“Over the past three years, we have learned

more about soil testing, tissue sampling, and how to be more precise with the timing of things,” Eric explains. “For example, I want every seed to emerge the same day. If you have one plant that comes up one day versus one that emerges the next day, you’ve already lost eight bushels an acre. On the second day, you’ve lost 16 to 18 bushels. The third, you’ve lost 25. That’s how crucial the planting process is.”

He adds that 300-bushel-plus yields should prove to every farmer that the potential is there for better-than-average crops.

“This contest has taught us to push ourselves to be the best we can be,” Eric says. “The ability to grow more corn on fewer acres will always provide a superior return on investment and make us better farmers. Once you know you can do it, it motivates you to do it again.”



Taft

Kris and Kole Phillips

Like the Reeds, father-and-son team Kris and Kole Phillips of Taft have been competing in the NCYC over the past three years, placing in each of the contests. In the 2021 contest, Kole took 1st place in the No-till, Irrigated category, with Kris taking 3rd place. With the help of Kris’ father, Keith, the Phillipses row-crop around 1,000 acres in Lincoln and Giles counties and run some 350 head of beef cattle.

Kole, 20, says he heard about the yield contest from his dad after the pair produced an irrigated corn crop of around 325 bushels per acre in 2017.

“As a former high school athlete, I’m competitive by nature, so I was excited to try the contest,” says Kole, who also works as Emergency Management Agency director for the city of Ardmore. “It’s been hard work, but a lot of fun.”

Kris, a longtime member of Lincoln Farmers Co-op, says he views the NCYC as both friendly competition and a learning process.

“It’s something you can joke about with your farming buddies and give them a hard time over,” he says with a grin. “But the simple truth is, you learn a lot that you can apply to your production acres. We’re doing things now that we never would’ve known about before the contest.”

Kole agrees and points to tissue sampling as a prime example.

“I had no idea about any of it,” he admits. “In my mind [prior to the contest], you drop a seed in the ground, water it, and it did its thing. But with the contest,



Taft farmer Kris Phillips, left, and his son, Kole, 20, have placed in the NCYC each of their first three years. Kole also works as director of the Emergency Management Agency of Ardmore, Tennessee.

I’d watch Dad go out and scout the fields, pull tissue samples, and review the results day after day. It’s fascinating how much science and technology can impact your crop, and we’ve learned the most about this from the contest.”

“There are so many tools out there you’ve got to utilize,” adds Kris. “What we’re learning has greatly improved our yield over the whole farm, and our return on investment continues to grow. I feel like we’ve just dipped our toe in the water.”

Kris points out that their 2021 contest win wouldn’t have been possible without some “divine” help.

“The Good Lord blessed us this year with the perfect amount of rain at the optimal times,” he says. “It was kind of amazing. We entered an irrigated class, but never turned on the irrigation a single time.”

To learn more about the National Corn Yield Contest, visit <https://www.ncga.com/get-involved/national-corn-yield-contest>.

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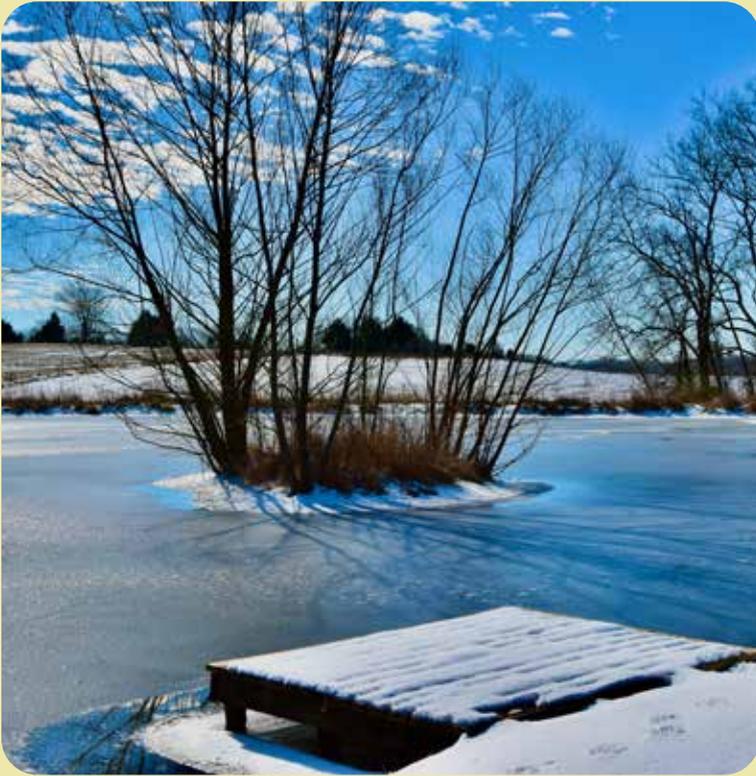
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Nature In Focus



Snow and ice on this pond in Maury County create a beautiful winter scene. — **Photo by Claire Hill**

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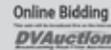
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Cherry Pie

Jean Jackson

West Point

Lawrence Farmers Co-op

1 ¼ cup sugar

¼ cup flour

¼ tsp. cinnamon

1 (16 oz.) can cherries

¼ tsp. almond extract

1 ½ tbsp. margarine

2 – 9 in. pie crusts

In a saucepan, combine sugar, flour, cinnamon, and cherries. Cook, stirring until the mixture thickens and boils. Stir in the almond extract and pour into pie crusts. Dot with margarine and cover with top crust. Bake at 425° for 30 to 35 minutes.

Makes-Its-Own-Crust Cherry Cobbler

Janice Walker

Luttrell

Union Farmers Co-op

2 cups sugar, divided

1 egg, beaten

½ cup milk

¾ cup self-rising flour

1 tbsp. melted butter or margarine

1 (16 oz.) can tart, red pitted cherries, undrained

Combine ½ cup of sugar, egg, milk, flour, and butter and beat well. Pour into a greased 1 ½-quart, deep baking dish. Combine remaining sugar and cherries in a saucepan. Bring to a boil and pour over batter. Bake at 425° for

15 to 20 minutes or until the top is brown and crusty.

Cherry Cheesecake

Jo Ann Hughes

Tompkinsville, KY

Macon Trousdale Farmers Co-op

1 (8 oz.) pkg. cream cheese, softened

½ cup fresh lemon juice

1 can sweetened, condensed milk

1 can cherry pie filling

1 graham cracker crust

Soften cream cheese and beat with mixer, adding lemon juice and condensed milk. Pour into graham cracker crust and top with cherry pie filling. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

Cherry Casserole

Debbie Reed

McMinnville

Warren Farmers Co-op

1 or 2 cans cherry pie filling

1 box yellow cake mix

2 sticks of melted margarine or butter

1 cup chopped nuts

Put pie filling in 9 x 13 pan.

Sprinkle cake mix over pie filling. Sprinkle nuts over cake mix.

Pour melted margarine/butter over mixture. Cover with foil and bake 15 minutes in 350° oven. Uncover and bake 30 minutes more, or until brown. *Note: 2 cans of cherry pie filling may be a little too much. Use your own judgement.

Cherry Coke Salad

Debbie Brashears

Murfreesboro

Rutherford Farmers Co-op

20 oz. can crushed pineapple

½ cup water

2 (3 oz.) pkgs. sugar free cherry gelatin

21 oz. can sugar free cherry pie filling

¾ cup Diet Coke

Drain pineapple, reserving juices; set fruit aside. In a saucepan or microwave, bring pineapple juice and water to a boil. Add gelatin; stir until dissolved. Stir in pie filling and Diet Coke. Pour into a serving bowl. Refrigerate until slightly thickened. Fold in reserved pineapple. Refrigerate until firm.

desired amount of pie filling before serving. Refrigerate.

Cherry Pineapple Salad

Peggy Bryan

Hillsboro

Coffee Farmers Co-op

1 can sweetened condensed milk

1 (15 oz.) can cherry pie filling

1 (15 oz.) can crushed pineapple

1 (8 oz.) container of cool whip

1 cup of chopped pecan (optional)

Mix all ingredients and freeze in a 9 x 12 dish. Serve as a salad on a lettuce leaf or use this as a dessert.

Cherry Cheese Pie

Betty Nettles

Manchester

Coffee Farmers Co-op

9-inch graham cracker crumb crust

8 oz. pkg cream cheese, softened

14 oz. can Eagle Brand milk

½ cup lemon juice

1 tsp. vanilla extract

21 oz. can cherry pie filling

In large mixing bowl, beat cheese until fluffy. Beat in Eagle Brand milk until smooth. Stir in real lemon juice and vanilla. Pour into crust. Chill 3 hours or until set. Top with

Cherries Jubilee

Sarah A. Greenwood

Hixson

Coffee Farmers Co-op

2 sticks margarine or butter

2 cans cherry pie filling

1 box yellow cake mix

1 ½ cups pecans

Vanilla ice cream

In a 13 x 9 pan, layer the following ingredients: pecans, cherry pie filling, and cake mix. Melt margarine/butter and pour over the top. Cover with foil and bake in preheated 350° oven for 15 minutes. Uncover and bake until bubbly and light brown, approximately 20 to 30 minutes longer. Serve with vanilla ice cream.

Recipes Using Caramel in April

We are dedicating the April edition of What's Cookin' to rich, gooey, delicious caramel! Whether it is drizzled, dipped, or layered, when it comes to caramel, we can't get enough.

Help us delight all our senses with your luscious caramel desserts and treats. Send us your favorite ways to cook with caramel and the person submitting the recipe judged best will be named "Cook of the Month" for the April 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, February 21, is the deadline for caramel 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.

Our Country Churches



312th in a series to show where our rural Co-op friends worship

Southside Freewill Baptist Church in Johnson County

Southside Freewill Baptist Church is a small congregation of believers located in downtown Mountain City, TN. The church building was originally used for a Presbyterian congregation to meet but was purchased and became Southside Freewill Baptist Church in 1974. The church is approximately 100 years old and still has the original stained glass windows and original wooden offering plates. Since 2017, Reverend Berrey Dunn has served as the current pastor, and leads the active youth and ladies groups in addition to the normal church services. The church gathers for Sunday School at 10 a.m., Sunday worship at 11 a.m., Sunday night services at 6 p.m., and Wednesday night bible study at 7 p.m.

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Just one of them

Robert Thompson feels connection to the farmer-owners he represents

Story and photos by Glen Liford

Robert Thompson of Niota is bringing knowledge and experience gained as a fourth-generation farmer and a former commercial lender to his new role as Tennessee Farmers Cooperative (TFC) director representing Zone 3.

Robert was elected at TFC's 2021 Annual Meeting held November 29 at the Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center in Nashville.

He says the many changes taking place in agriculture and at TFC with the establishment of the joint venture companies were among the many reasons he felt compelled to seek the position.

"I think TFC is in a time of transition with the joint ventures," says Robert. "Times have changed, and we won't be able to do things like we have in the past. TFC is in really good [financial] shape, and we all want to preserve the farm supply business and the services TFC offers for the next generation."

The innovative farmer comes by his dedication to Co-op honestly. His dad, Howell, became a member of McMinn Farmers Co-op — one of the forerunners to what is now known as AgCentral Farmers Co-op — when he began farming in the early 1950s. He was serving as president of the Co-op board and signed his son's own membership certificate when Robert joined the Co-op in 1983. Robert went on to serve on the board of Valley Farmers Co-op and is in his eighth year of service on the AgCentral board, which included terms as secretary and vice president. He just began the first year of a three-year term that will be his last before he rotates off the board.

"I think you really need to sit on a local Co-op board before you serve on the TFC board," he says. "The experience gives you understanding of how the locals work and how they depend on TFC to function."

Robert graduated McMinn County High School and received an associate's degree in agriculture from Hiwassee College in Madisonville and a bachelor's degree in agriculture with an animal science major from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

"I always knew I really wanted to come home to farm, but I also knew I had to get a degree," says Robert.

Robert went to work for a local bank after graduation and ended up spending 20 years in the financial business while farming on the side. In the banking industry, he saw his share of mergers, consolidations, and buyouts, and learned the importance of careful financial practices and lending rules.

Robert and his wife, Lyn, still live on the 43-acre farm his great grandfather purchased in 1883. Operating a successful dairy, his great grandfather was able to eventually grow the farm to 480 acres. The original homeplace is still standing on the property.

"Times got a little rough during the Depression, and my grandparents had to sell off 150 acres," says Robert. "But later, my dad and mom got married, came back to the farm, and bought the original 330 acres from my granddad."

His parents ran the dairy for around 10 years before going back to teaching school.

Today, Robert farms around 760 acres with the help of son, Will, who also works off the farm as a mechanical engineer. Will and his wife, McKenzie, live on the farm as well. They call the property Lane View Farms.

"We have around 241 brood cows, and along with calves and our registered Angus bulls, we have 464 head on the farm right now," says Robert. "About 25 percent of those are registered Angus. We use registered Angus bulls and own a partial interest in the Select Sires bull Deer Valley Optimum, which gives us additional access to some outstanding genetics."

Robert also does embryo transfer work and recently flushed some 25 grade-1 embryos from Poss Deadwood.

"We're excited to see what comes from these embryos," he says. "Agriculture is changing, just like the Co-op, and we're definitely not doing things the way we did even 10 years ago."

Robert says he is grateful for the confidence shown by his fellow farmers by electing him to his new TFC director post.

"I told everyone to contact me if there was anything they wanted to discuss," he says. "We can always talk, and I will listen. I try to be open minded, and I admit there are things I don't know. For example, I didn't realize that Tennessee is the last federated co-op in the nation. That's kind of surprising, and we really don't want to take for granted what we've got here."



The Thompson's Lane View Farms is a family operation with, from left, Robert, son, Will, and his wife, McKenzie, and Lyn. The family raises beef cattle with about 25 percent of the herd registered Angus.



Niota



“After I was elected a lot of people came up to me and said they really felt like I was one of them. I feel a connection to them.” — Robert Thompson

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