All systems go!
As Tennessee Ag Enhancement Program returns for 10th year, Co-op experts are ready to help producers with their livestock equipment needs

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Spring planting intentions show less corn, more soybeans and cotton - p. 5
Ag Day events showcase importance of state’s farming industry - p. 8
Dyersburg couple helps support local youth livestock exhibitors - p. 22
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Cover Story

10 All systems go!
With the 2014 Tennessee Agricultural Enhancement Program (TAEP) gearing up for next month’s application period, now’s the time for producers to begin making plans for equipment or projects they want to request in this year’s program. Many farmers, like Bobby Wilson of Marshall County, right, will rely on Co-op hardware experts like Bryan Wrather, left, and Brett Jones to help design, order, and install new cattle-working systems purchased with TAEP cost-share funds.

ON THE COVER: With his 2013 TAEP assistance, Bobby Wilson, who farms in the Belfast community, was approved to purchase this new For-Most cattle-handling system from Marshall Farmers Cooperative.
— Photos by Allison Morgan

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TenneScene

One of the most popular stations at the April 12 “Adventures in Agriculture” event at Lane Agri-Park in Murfreesboro was Rutherford Farmers Cooperative’s interactive booth, where 2-year-old Wesley Shepherd enjoys “feeding” a stuffed lamb, cow, and horse. Youngsters could also ride a pedal tractor and give a toy bull a “vaccination.”
— Photo by Allison Morgan

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Meet farmer and former brick layer Harold Cox of Benton County.
As I Was Saying

Tennessee Blue Book turns UT orange

A few days ago, in digging through the sizeable stash of “stuff” I’ve saved over the years, I came across a 1954 Tennessee Blue Book whose well-worn cover features small portraits of four famous notables Tennesseans: Andrew Jackson, James K. Polk, Cordell Hull, and Frank G. Clement, our governor then.

I would have been a freshman at Whitesburg High School when that edition was printed and distributed free of charge to any Tennessee resident who wanted it. I don’t remember how I got mine, but I’m glad I kept it.

First printed in 1929, the really thick Tennesse Blue Book is a marvelous reference source for anyone who’s interested in learning a lot about government in our state and the people who make it work. It’s ironic that my 60-year-old, 432-page keepsake surfaced amidst a cleverly conceived, government in our state and the people who make it work. It’s ironic that about 50,000 of those were printed, and they include the same information as the orange www.capitol.tn.gov/orange that residents. To contact legislators, go to www.capitol.tn.gov/senate/members/. If a Big Orange squeeze has depleted supplies, ask if a blue-covered book is available. About 50,000 of those were printed, and they include the same information as the orange ones. Either is definitely a Tennessee treasure.

Tennessee Secretary of State Tre Hargett, whose job description includes publishing the book every two years, was on hand to help honor Pat, the Head Summitt, iconic head coach emeritus of the tradition-rich, super-successful University of Tennessee Lady Vol basketball program. Tennessee orange-covered book before the ceremony at the impressive Women’s Basketball Hall of Fame in Knoxville, the newest Tennessee Blue Book was dedicated to Pat Head Summitt, iconic head coach emeritus of the tradition-rich, super-successful University of Tennessee Lady Vol basketball program. Tennessee orange-covered book before the ceremony at the impressive Women’s Basketball Hall of Fame in Knoxville, the newest Tennessee Blue Book was dedicated to Pat Head Summitt, iconic head coach emeritus of the tradition-rich, super-successful University of Tennessee Lady Vol basketball program. Tennessee orange-covered book before the ceremony at the impressive Women’s Basketball Hall of Fame in Knoxville, the newest Tennessee Blue Book was dedicated to Pat Head Summitt, iconic head coach emeritus of the tradition-rich, super-successful University of Tennessee Lady Vol basketball program. Tennessee orange-covered book before the ceremony at the impressive Women’s Basketball Hall of Fame in Knoxville, the newest Tennessee Blue Book was dedicated to Pat Head Summitt, iconic head coach emeritus of the tradition-rich, super-successful University of Tennessee Lady Vol basketball program. Tennessee orange-covered book before the ceremony at the impressive Women’s Basketball Hall of Fame in Knoxville, the newest Tennessee Blue Book was dedicated to Pat Head Summitt, iconic head coach emeritus of the tradition-rich, super-successful University of Tennessee Lady Vol basketball program. Tennessee orange-covered book before the ceremony at the impressive Women’s Basketball Hall of Fame in Knoxville, the newest Tennessee Blue Book was dedicated to Pat Head Summitt, iconic head coach emeritus of the tradition-rich, super-successful University of Tennessee Lady Vol basketball program. Tennessee orange-covered book before the ceremony at the impressive Women’s Basketball Hall of Fame in Knoxville, the newest Tennessee Blue Book was dedicated to Pat Head Summitt, iconic head coach emeritus of the tradition-rich, super-successful University of Tennessee Lady Vol basketball program. Tennessee orange-covered book before the ceremony at the impressive Women’s Basketball Hall of Fame in Knoxville, the newest Tennessee Blue Book was dedicated to Pat Head Summitt, iconic head coach emeritus of the tradition-rich, super-successful University of Tennessee Lady Vol basketball program. Tennessee orange-covered book before the ceremony at the impressive Women’s Basketball Hall of Fame in Knoxville, the newest Tennessee Blue Book was dedicated to Pat Head Summitt, iconic head coach emeritus of the tradition-rich, super-successful University of Tennessee Lady Vol basketball program. Tennessee orange-covered book before the ceremony at the impressive Women’s Basketball Hall of Fame in Knoxville, the newest Tennessee Blue Book was dedicated to Pat Head Summitt, iconic head coach emeritus of the tradition-rich, super-successful University of Tennessee Lady Vol basketball program.
Survey shows farmers intend to plant less corn, more soybeans, cotton in 2014

Following a nationwide trend, Tennessee growers intend to plant less corn and more cotton and soybeans in 2014, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Prospective Plantings Report on March 31.

Based on a survey conducted of farmers during the first two weeks of March, corn planted for all purposes in Tennessee is estimated at 830,000 acres, down 7 percent from last year. If the estimate holds, this will be the third consecutive year that corn acreage has decreased, but it would still be greater than the state’s 10-year average.

The drop in the state’s corn acreage compared to 2013 is no surprise, says Alan Sparkman, Tennessee Farmers Cooperative agronomy marketing manager. “We expected corn acres to be down because of a lower market prices, but weather conditions this spring could hurt corn acres even more,” says Sparkman. “We’ve had plenty of rain and cool temperatures that have kept many farmers from planting corn when they intended.”

Soybean plantings are estimated at 1.6 million acres, up 3 percent from 2013. This would represent the highest planted acreage in Tennessee since 1984. Year-over-year soybean acreage has increased seven of the past eight years in Tennessee.

Cotton acreage is estimated up 30,000 acres from 2013 at 280,000. The estimated planted acreage is the same as the March 2013 estimate and well behind five- and 10-year average acreage.

Wheat acreage is estimated at 560,000 acres, down 50,000 acres from 2013. This is still above the five- and 10-year average for the state.

Nationwide, farmers intend to plant a total of 91.7 million acres of corn, down 4 percent from last year. If realized, this will represent the lowest planted acreage in the U.S. since 2010 but still the fifth-largest corn acreage since 1944.

U.S. soybeans are estimated at a record high 81.5 million, up 6 percent from last year. All cotton planted for 2014 is expected to total 10.9 million acres, up 7 percent from 2013. All wheat acreage, including winter, spring, and durum, is reported at 55.8 million acres, down 1 percent from last year. Specifically, winter wheat is 42 million acres, down 3 percent.

Horse owners invited to ‘pasture walk’

The University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture invites horse owners and those involved in the equine industry to learn more about environmentally friendly farm management practices in a hands-on setting at a “Horse Pasture Walk.”

The event will be held Thursday, May 8, from 4 to 6 p.m. at the Middle Tennessee AgResearch and Education Center located on Highway 31 in Spring Hill.

Topics will include forage production, weed control, and manure management as well as the latest in nutrition and parasite control for horses.

This event is free and open to the public, but registration is requested by May 5. Register via email to Bridgett McIntosh, UT Extension horse specialist, at bmcintosh@utk.edu. Contact the center at 931-486-2129 for more information.

4-H now registering for summer camp

After a long winter, many kids are dreaming of summer fun — and that could include a trip to a Tennessee 4-H camp.

In 2014, more than 4,000 Tennessee youth are expected to attend the three summer camps in Columbia, Crossville, and Greeneville. University of Tennessee Extension agents in every county are now registering thousands of kids for this summer’s adventures. But there’s always room for more campers.

Students in fourth through eighth grades are eligible, and they don’t have to be 4-H members to attend. Kids can take part in activities from arts and crafts to ziplining. Each camp also has its own pool and dormitories as well as nature centers, hiking trails, and sports fields.

If you are interested in 4-H camp, contact the Extension office in your county for registration information.
Recipe for success

Ag Day events mix milk and eggs to create positive publicity about Tennessee’s farming industry

Story and photos by Allison Morgan

Milk and eggs. They’re staples on just about any grocery list, but they’ve also become essential ingredients for Tennessee’s Ag Day celebrations.

Two high-profile events held less than a week apart featured these traditional farm products in nontraditional ways to spotlight the state’s agricultural industry. The fun started on Thursday, March 20, with the “Celebrity Omelet Cook-Off” featuring news anchors and reporters from all four of Nashville’s television stations competing against each other to create the best egg dishes as judged by a panel of agricultural leaders.

The following Tuesday, March 25, Ag Day on the Hill was once again highlighted by a cow-milking contest in the courtyard of Legislative Plaza in downtown Nashville, pitting Tennessee Lt. Gov. Ron Ramsey of Blountville against Speaker of the House Beth Harwell of Nashville. Despite the fact that snow flurries were flying, an enthusiastic crowd gathered for the popular event, held on the 41st observance of National Agriculture Day.

“We’re here to showcase an industry that now statistically represents less than 2 percent of the folks in the U.S. who are directly involved in agricultural production,” said Rep. Andy Holt, vice chairman of the Tennessee House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources and organizer of Ag Day on the Hill. “There may be only a few of us, but there’s great heart associated with agriculture. We love what we do. We’re passionate about it, and our main goal is to spread understanding to others. We don’t get recognized very often because we’re usually out working, but we’re committed to taking care of the food, fiber, and fuel needs that each of these folks have — rain or shine. Even snow.”

Tennessee’s 76,000 farms and 10.8 million acres in production represent a $66 billion impact on the state’s total economy and support some 337,900 jobs. Tennessee Agriculture Commissioner Julius Johnson emphasized those figures as he presented

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the proclamation from Gov. Bill Haslam designating March 25 as “Agriculture Day” in the state.

“Hopefully, this opportunity will impress on our urban friends the importance of that rural community out there and what’s going on at the farm,” said Johnson. “Maybe then they’ll assist us in accomplishing some of our goals.”

In a new twist this year, each milking contest competitor had an assistant: Harwell had help from Rep. John Forgety of Athens while Ramsey teamed up with Sen. Frank Niceley of Strawberry Plains to pull in the victory. The Farm and Forest Families of Tennessee, an organization of which Co-op is a member, presented a check for $750 to the Second Harvest Food Bank in the lieutenant governor’s honor. The Holstein cows were provided by the Gardner family of Trace-View Holsteins in Santa Fe, members of Maury Farmers Cooperative.

In addition to the outdoor activities, Ag Day on the Hill featured indoor exhibits from a variety of agricultural organizations, including Tennessee Farmers Cooperative, which provided the animal pens and displayed equipment that can be purchased with cost-share funds from the Tennessee Agricultural Enhancement Program.

A standing-room-only crowd also participated in a special session of the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee that featured comments from Commissioner Johnson as well as Tennessee State 4-H Governor John Calvin Bryant of Lawrence County and a recorded message from Tennessee FFA officers, who were at the state FFA convention the same day.

To kick off Ag Day on the Hill festivities, a “Picnic on the Plaza” was held the night before, although it had to be moved inside the War Memorial Auditorium due to the cold snap.

This was the second time for this event in which state legislators and special guests were invited to an evening meal, this year provided by the “Chew on This” tour as part of the Drive to Feed the World project. Sponsored by NutraBlend and Elanco, this tour is bringing awareness to the role modern agriculture plays in feeding the world. Several

Despite snow flurries, a good-sized crowd was on hand for the Ag Day on the Hill milking contest at Legislative Plaza in Nashville.

hundred meals were also provided to homeless and needy families through the People Loving Nashville group.

At the Ag Day omelet cook-off the previous Thursday — which was also the first day of spring — the WSMW Channel 4 team of Holly Thompson and Ian Reitz took home bragging rights and the appropriately designed Lodge Cast-Iron skillet trophy. But no one drew more attention than the team from NewsChannel 5, Steve Hayslip and Amy Watson, who made a grand entrance dressed as Elvis and Dolly Parton, respectively. Their creative costumes helped them earn the contest’s new “Best Presentation” award.

“We decided that Tennessee not only exports great crops and great ag products but also great music, so we thought Elvis and Dolly represented that side of our state well,” said Hayslip. “We’ve come up empty-handed two years in a row with our omelet, but we’re so honored to have the Best Presentation trophy. Don’t know what that says about our cooking skills, though.”

For the first time, this high-energy activity was held at the governor’s Tennessee Residence, with First Lady Crissy Haslam serving as host inside the Conservation Hall event center.

“I’m really glad to be here today to highlight Tennessee ag,” said Haslam. “It affects our daily lives in so many ways — not just the food we eat but the clothes we wear, the fuel we pump, the wood products we use, and much more. Bill and I thank the farmers and everyone involved in agriculture across the state.”

Representing those farmers at the event was Brandon Whitt of Batey Farms in Murfreesboro, who spoke to the cook-off crowd, sang one of his original ag-themed songs, “Proud,” and then served as the omelet judge.

“Agriculture, I believe, tops the list of the many wonderful things about Tennessee,” said Whitt. “But consumers who eat our food generally don’t understand the real story of farm production. In agriculture, we strive to perfect what we do, but we don’t always stand up and tell our story. It’s a long road to wisdom, and a short road to being ignored.”

Tennessee First Lady Crissy Haslam welcomes the Ag Day Omelet Cookoff attendees to the event, which was hosted for the first time by the Haslams at Conservation Hall on the grounds of the governor’s mansion. Coordinating the event was Tennessee Farm Bureau’s Lee Maddox, representing the Farm and Forest Families of Tennessee.
Continuing with a program that was launched last year, Tennessee Farmers Cooperative and the Tennessee Cattlemen’s Association (TCA) will partner to offer livestock-related prizes to TCA members who recruit a new TCA member in 2014. These prizes are valued at up to $4,500.

Successful TCA recruiters will be entered into a drawing for his or her choice from a list of available equipment: Priefert squeeze chute, W-W sweep system, 300-gallon Ag Spray pasture sprayer, Tru-Test scale system with a Co-op alley package, Co-op hi-pole gate package, or Gallagher/Miraco fence/waterer package. The winning name will be drawn from all eligible entries and announced Jan. 16, 2015, at the TCA convention in Murfreesboro.

“I believe in what TCA does for cattle producers and am proud to help recruit new members for the association,” said TCA member Barry Cooper of White County, who won last year’s competition and selected a Priefert squeeze chute. “And I really appreciate the support of Co-op. The new squeeze chute I won will really help me better manage my cattle operation.”

In addition to the livestock-related prize, one new member selected at random will win an expense-paid trip to the 2015 TCA convention, including a two-night stay at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Murfreesboro. Total value of the trip is up to $500. Any new member attending the 2015 convention will also have an opportunity to register for a $1,000 Co-op prize package (a combination of feed, animal health, crop protection, seed, farm hardware, and clothing).

To be eligible for the drawing, the person joining TCA must be defined as a new member (not a member at any point in 2013) and must have joined the association in 2014. For recruiters, his or her name must be listed on the membership application when it is sent in to TCA with payment. Recruiters’ names will be entered as many times as they recruit a new member.

Founded in 1985, the Tennessee Cattlemen’s Association is made up of more than 6,000 cattle producers and industry supporters from across the state. Its mission is to provide Tennessee cattle producers with an organization that protects their interests, solves cattle industry problems, and builds “goodwill.” TCA membership is just $30 a year and includes a monthly subscription to the award-winning Tennessee Cattle Business magazine, discounts on Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) trainings, and invitations to area meetings and other events.

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For once, Bobby Wilson didn’t dread cattle-working time this spring. Neither did his wife, Stephanie, nor their 12-year-old son, Kevin, who typically help with their Marshall County beef operation’s twice-a-year chore.

That’s because the Wilsons performed the normally stressful job of working their 53-head cow/calf herd with a brand-new For-Most cattle-handling system, which replaced some old, worn-out equipment that came with a 162-acre farm they purchased in 2004 between Lewisburg and Shelbyville. Bobby collaborated with hardware experts from Marshall Farmers Cooperative and Tennessee Farmers Cooperative in designing, ordering, and installing the For-Most system, which was anchored in place just in time for this season’s vaccinations.

“I had a lot of trouble with the system that was here before,” says Bobby, who retired from General Motors in 2008 after a 32-year career. “It wasn’t safe for me, my family, or my cows. In fact, my wife said she was going to quit on me if I didn’t get something better. With this new system, it’s actually going to be fun to work the cattle now.”

Bobby purchased the customized For-Most system with cost-share funds from the 2013 Tennessee Agricultural Enhancement Program (TAEP), now entering its 10th year of helping the state’s farmers make long-term strategic investments to increase farm efficiency, safety, and profitability. The June 1-7 application period is fast approaching for the 2014 program, which will once offer cost-share assistance for cattle genetics; livestock handling equipment; livestock working facility cover; hay, feed, and grain storage; agri-tourism; specialty crops; and value-added products.

Even with well-publicized state budget shortfalls, Tennessee Department of Agriculture (TDA) officials say they expect this year’s TAEP to be fully funded by the legislature at $21 million. Since the program began in 2005, the state has invested $90 million in more than 30,000 on-farm projects, including nearly 3,500 last year.

“Ag Enhancement is a great success story, and we consider the Co-op a strong partner in this program,” says Tennessee Agriculture Commissioner Julius Johnson. “We all need to continue to reinforce our support for the program with our legislators and make sure they know just how much it means to our state’s farmers and agricultural economy.”

New TAEP administrator
Mark Powell is also hopeful that the program will continue for the foreseeable future. He’s experienced TAEP’s impact from all angles — as a sheep producer, as former manager of Wilson Farmers Cooperative, and now at the TDA level. “I definitely have a unique perspective on the advantages of Ag Enhancement,” says Mark. “That makes me appreciate everything Co-op is doing to support the program by getting the word out, providing equipment that producers can purchase, helping them make decisions on what they need, and then answering questions along the way.”

Indeed, Co-op’s involvement with the TAEP goes well beyond selling approved equipment. Sure, Co-op offers a full selection of products from all major manufacturers, but the assistance to TAEP participants doesn’t stop there. TFC and member Co-op professionals provide personalized service to help producers determine their needs, evaluate the desired location of a working system, make recommendations, consult with vendors to order the equipment to exact specifications, and, in many cases, even handle the installation.

“Co-op isn’t just a retail outlet — we offer a start-to-finish service,” says Gary Satterfield, TFC hardware field specialist in East Tennessee. “There are so many resources the farmer can count on and so many people who work together to make this happen.”

Putting in the new For-Most system on the Wilson farm was assuredly a group effort, with Marshall Farmers livestock specialist Brett Jones and other local Co-op employees teaming up with TFC hardware field specialist Bryan Wrather and product managers in the TFC Farm Hardware Department. “We measured his barn, looked at what he wanted and where he brings in his cattle, sent the measurements to TFC, and then For-Most customized it to meet his needs,” says Brett. “They designed it so that it would fit in this space, adding an extra bow panel to the sweep and moving out the center point to make it work. That’s the great thing about Co-op — our producers can get exactly what they want, and they know it will work because we’re here to help.”

When it came time to order his TAEP-approved equipment last year, Bobby says he already knew he wanted the For-Most brand but relied on the knowledge and experience of the Co-op and TFC personnel to help him choose the right components and composition of the system.

“It meant a lot to have the Co-op helping me,” says Bobby. “They listened to what I wanted, and they brought it all together, which is great. I really appreciate that.”

Because of the diversity of Tennessee farms, Bryan says a “one-size-fits-all” approach doesn’t apply to cattle-handling systems, which means Co-op’s selection and service give producers a decided advantage. “Most producers I’ve dealt with know they want a system, systems, which means Co-op’s selection and service give producers a decided advantage. “Most producers I’ve dealt with know they want a system, (See TAEP, page 12)

Get prepared for 2014 TAEP

W ith the application period only a month away, now’s the time to start making plans and filling out forms for the 2014 Tennessee Agricultural Enhancement Program (TAEP). Completed applications must be submitted online or received from June 1-7 to be considered. As in years past, producers can receive 35-percent cost-share for cattle, goat, and sheep genetics; livestock equipment; hay, feed, and grain storage facilities; and diversification projects like agritourism, organics, fruit/vegetable production, bee/honey production, viticulture, and value-added products. Applicants who have completed programs like the Master Beef Producer, Master Meat Goat Producer, and Tennessee Quality Milk Improvement can receive 50-percent cost-share. The maximum funding ranges from $1,200 to $15,000, depending on the project. Several notable changes have been made to the 2014 program:

• Producer Diversification — Information and forms for this program are now in a separate Application B. All other programs are included in Application A.

• Used Equipment — The livestock equipment, grain storage, and feed storage programs have added several options for eligible used equipment, including headgates, squeeze chutes, palpation cages, portable corral panels, crowding tub systems, loading chute, alley panels, alley frames, transport augers, and mixer wagons/grinder-mixers. According to the application, used items must be “in excellent working condition, have no excessive rust, be of functional soundness, and have a reasonable market price.”

• Livestock Working Facility Cover — This is a new program to allow producers to add a shed or barn to cover their cattle-handling equipment. Producers can only participate in this program one time.

• Hay Storage — This program is now restricted to four lifetime reimbursements.

Like last year, applications can be submitted online at www.tn.gov/taep as well as mailed or hand-delivered. Producer diversification applicants can now apply online as well. Applicants must rank their projects by priority; approval will be given based on those rankings as long as funds are available. TAEP applications are now available at Co-ops across the state or can be downloaded from www.ourcoop.com by clicking on the TAEP logo. For more information, talk to your local Co-op, visit online at www.tda.gov/taep, or call TDA at 800-342-8206.
but they don't know exactly what they want,” adds Bryan. “The good thing is, we have all kinds of different options. We can mix components. We can customize the system to fit their space, meet their needs, or stay within their budget. And then it takes some expertise when you install it because there’s always some tweaking or adjusting that needs to be done.”

Brett says he’s worked with many producers in similar situations in the four counties — Marshall, Maury, Williamson, and Bedford — he covers as a Co-op livestock specialist. “We were extremely busy this fall and winter, and we’re still finishing up a few systems this spring,” says Brett. “I’ve actually got a whole book filled with systems I’ve custom-designed, based on specific farms and specific needs. I try to think through the whole process and give customers a broad picture, even if they don’t do an entire system right now. Next year, they might want to add to it.”

In fact, says TFC Hardware Department Manager Jimmy Ogilvie, it’s common for producers to request repeat assistance from Co-op and TFC hardware specialists. “The true compliment is being asked back out on the farm two or three years later to add to a system or put in a new one in a different location,” says Jimmy. “We see that happen a lot. They ask us back because they were happy with what we did.”

Bobby says he’s certainly happy with the finished setup of his new working system — and so are his cattle. “The good thing about using that old system is learning what I didn’t want,” he says. “You want to get done as quickly as you can when you’re working cattle because the quicker you get them out, the better. They get excited, tired, and worked up. You want to keep it as simple as possible. We needed something that was going to work well and be efficient. This is going to make a huge difference.”

Overall, Bryan says, the TAEP has undoubtedly been a benefit to Tennessee farmers and the agricultural community. “Ag Enhancement has increased the safety of the farms and improved the health of the herds because people work them more often,” says Bryan. “Just like Bobby ... he’s going to enjoy working cows more now and not be scared of it. It’s been a big help, all the way around, for the economy, the farmers, and the cattle, too.”

Bobby says he enjoys the squeeze chute’s features, like side doors that open for easy access to the animal. This system was custom-built by For-Most to meet his needs.
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May 2014 13
How is a group of stocker calves like a class of kindergartners?

It may sound like the opening to a corny joke, but there's no punchline here. Henderson County farmer Jimmy Lewis uses this simple analogy to help explain the challenge of maintaining the health of the cattle he is continually introducing to his L&L Farms in Wildersville.

“If you take a 450-pound calf born in the spring when the grass is there, he doesn’t know what a feed bunk is,” says Jimmy. “He’s never had feed or hay. So, when fall of the year comes, it’s new to him. He has to learn. It’s like sending kids to kindergarten. They don’t know what it’s like at first, and they end up coming home sick because they don’t have the immunity they need to be around other kids who are sick. It’s just like that.”

But, unlike teachers who receive one group of students in the fall and keep them until the end of the school year, Jimmy has new “classes” arriving every week for the stocker operation he runs with wife Donna and their sons, Andy and Lee. They rely on order buyers to purchase 60 to 100 male calves in the 400- to 450-pound range each week from sale barns all across the area.

Once the cattle arrive on the farm, they are processed and vaccinated. They remain in a receiving pen for several days until being turned out into small pasture lots throughout the Lewises’ 800-acre farm. The calves receive a steady diet of Co-op feed and minerals and learn to drink from waterers and eat from feed bunks in preparation for their eventual destination at feedlots in Texas or the western U.S.

“We start them out on about 1 percent of their body weight in feed and work up until about 2 percent and run them on either fescue or ryegrass pastures,” explains Jimmy. “The goal is to get them up to about 800 to 850 pounds over a period of about 150 days.”

At its peak each year, L&L Farms may have up to 1,400 head at a time, all from different backgrounds, so maintaining the health and nutritional status of the stockers is the biggest challenge to profitability, says Jimmy. That’s why, about five years ago, the Lewises decided to start providing Co-op Supreme Mineral (#678) year-round to help boost immunity and improve feed conversion in their cattle.

“Before, I didn’t feed a lot of minerals because I had a good mineral in my complete feed and always felt like I didn’t need it,” says Jimmy. “But in this business, you learn something new all the time. After going to different seminars and reading more about it, I thought it would benefit us if we keep mineral in front of the cattle. And it has. We see better weight gain, their health is improved, and their hair is more glossy. You can see the difference.”

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The Lewises soon learned that they needed a reliable way to deliver these minerals to ensure the supplement was being consumed. They found what they were looking for in Co-op’s Herdsman Super Heavy-Duty Mineral Feeder (#15440).

“I had just been putting the minerals in my feed troughs,
but the first time it rained and got wet, the cattle wouldn’t eat them,” says Jimmy. “With these Co-op feeders, the tub protects the mineral and turns real easy when the wind is blowing. They won’t tip over, and even the cattle can’t knock them down. It’s one of the best investments that we’ve made. You just couldn’t ask for one to be any better.”

Designed and built at Tennessee Farmers Cooperative’s Metal Fabrication Plant in La Vergne, the Herdsman feeder offers high-quality features unlike any other on the market today. The base is four feet wide — making it extremely difficult for even the most determined animal to topple — and clear coat galvanized for a long life in the field. With a capacity of three blocks or 100 pounds of loose mineral, the tub sits high enough for a farmer to comfortably fill, features a grease fitting and wind vane to keep the opening facing away from incoming weather, and is made of thick polyethylene to withstand daily punishment.

“They are definitely durable,” says Andy, who also works a “public job” with the Farm Service Agency. “We’ve had these for at least three years, and they look like new. We haven’t had any trouble out of them.”

In fact, the Lewises have been so impressed by the performance of these feeders that they’ve purchased more than 25 of them over the last few years, placing a couple near the bunk feeders in each of their cattle “traps” — pasture lots of five to 10 acres where the producers can divide the stockers into smaller groups for easier management and control. TFC nutritionists recommend providing one mineral feeder per 20-30 cattle as a good rule.

“When you do what Jimmy does, it takes a lot of mineral feeders,” says Jason Hearn, livestock specialist with First Farmers Cooperative, where the Lewises purchase many of their farm supplies. “When you’re swapping these cattle around from trap to trap and lot to lot, you don’t want to move the feeders around all the time. And, as inexpensive as they are, you just buy a bunch of them.”

In addition to pasture stations, the Lewises always provide minerals along with hay and fresh water for newly arrived calves in their receiving pens, where the Herdsman feeders are particularly useful, points out Lee, who, like his brother, has an off-the-farm job as a bridge inspector for the Tennessee Department of Transportation.

“Minerals have no doubt improved the health of our cattle, especially in the beginning when they’re not getting a whole lot of feed,” he says. “Having these mineral feeders around has helped make sure we’re getting them off to the right start.”

With covered mineral feeders now on the list of eligible livestock equipment for the Tennessee Agricultural Enhancement Program (TAEP) cost-share funds, Jason says many other producers have discovered the benefits of the Herdsman model for themselves. Like other TAEP items, the program will cover 50 percent of the feeder’s cost for Master Beef Producers and 35 percent for those without this designation.

“I have been at Co-op for 23 years, and I think these mineral feeders are the best product TFC has ever made,” says the livestock specialist, who raises beef cattle on his own Chester County farm. “And now that the Enhancement program has added them, they’re one of the biggest-selling individual items that Co-op has ever sold. And if you can buy them at half price, why not?”

The Lewises say they’re also pleased that mineral feeders are now part of the TAEP, which has helped them make much-needed improvements to their family farm. They’ve purchased certified livestock scales, coral panels, bulk feed bins, and feed troughs, among other items. They’ve also built a commodity shed and a hay barn and were approved for another barn last year.

“We’re thankful that the governor and legislators have allowed us to share in this Enhancement money,” says Jimmy. “It is a really good program, not only for the older farmer but for a young farmer trying to get started. It really helps them.”

As part of the next generation at L&L Farms, Andy agrees that the TAEP can give producers like himself and his brother, Lee, an advantage as they try to carry on the family’s agricultural tradition in an increasingly competitive and challenging environment.

“It’s allowed a lot of people like us to do things that they wouldn’t have ordinarily been able to do — upgrade working facilities, build barns, buy feed troughs, whatever,” says Andy. “For those who are trying to get into farming, it would be extremely difficult to make these investments without Ag Enhancement. There just aren’t many programs out there geared toward helping cattle producers, so any help we can get, we certainly do appreciate it.”

For more information about Herdsman Super Heavy-Duty Mineral Feeders and Co-op minerals, visit with the livestock experts at your local Co-op.
It’s MAX-LOC!
from HERDSMAN BRAND

What’s the big deal about MAX-LOC?
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- Fixed-knot technology introduces a third wire that ties the continuous vertical and horizontal wire together.
- Provides maximum hold.
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Field fence at its finest!

3-wires in every knot!

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Krisle named 2014 ‘Friend of 4-H’

For his efforts in helping spearhead Tennessee Farmers Cooperative’s long-standing support of the state’s 4-H youth development programs, TFC Chief Executive Officer Bart Krisle has received the 2014 “Friend of 4-H” Award from the Tennessee 4-H Foundation.

The award, the highest individual honor given by the foundation each year, was presented to Krisle April 1 during the 67th annual Tennessee 4-H Congress Citizenship Banquet at the Sheraton Downtown Nashville Hotel.

Krisle is the second TFC employee in the past three years to be recognized with the “Friend of 4-H” honor. Livestock Division Manager Joe Huffine — a member of the 4-H Foundation’s board of directors since 2006 — was honored in 2012.

In presenting the award, University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture Chancellor Dr. Larry Arrington lauded Krisle’s leadership that has resulted in Co-op donating significantly to Tennessee 4-H, including $250,000 over the last 13 years through sales of a commemorative Case 4-H/FFA Knife.

“Under [Krisle’s] guidance, Tennessee Farmers Co-op is a strong advocate for 4-H programming,” said Arrington. “As one of the organization’s largest donors, Co-op has made it possible for young people to have opportunities such as the ones experienced this week at Tennessee 4-H Congress. And Bart has been a true friend of 4-H throughout the process. Thank you for all you do and have done for 4-H youth development programs.”

Krisle said he was “humbled” to receive the award. “It’s an honor to be recognized by such a worthwhile organization,” he said. “But I really accept the ‘Friend of 4-H’ on behalf of TFC and the 54 member Co-ops who make up our system in Tennessee. Our system is dedicated to — and believes strongly in — helping to develop the leadership skills of young people. That’s why we support Tennessee 4-H and are committed to continuing that support in the future.”

Krisle, a Robertson County native, has served in his current capacity at Co-op since 2006. He began his TFC career as a field auditor in 1983 and moved to the Internal Auditing Department in 1987. In 1988, he became manager of the Member Support Department in information services and was named Region 2 operations specialist in 1992. He held that position until being named chief operating officer in 1999.

He and wife Kim live in Greenbrier and have a son, Dale, and two daughters, Joanna Ruth and Jamie Leigh.

Tennessee Farmers Cooperative Chief Executive Officer Bart Krisle, center, receives congratulations from University of Tennessee Dean of Extension Dr. Tim Cross, left, and UT Institute of Agriculture Chancellor Dr. Larry Arrington, after being awarded the 2014 “Friend of 4-H,” the Tennessee 4-H Foundation’s highest honor.
New at Co-op

Blackstone Tailgater Grill Combo
The Blackstone Tailgater Grill Combo is the perfect unit to cook “tailgating” foods when you’re at an event, camping, or even at home. Versatile, portable, and unique, the Blackstone Tailgater’s cooking surface consists of a 16-x-16-inch griddle as well as a grill top. It operates on a propane tank. The tailgater legs are adjustable to work in any terrain and will also fold, making the unit conveniently portable and fun. Assembly is simple and quick.

Features:
• Powerful 30,000 BTU per burner for a total of 60,000 BTU
• Electronic ignition built into each burner
• Heavy-duty grill box with vent, handle, and durable cast iron grill grates
• Rugged and portable steel griddle for optimal heat distribution and cooking performance

Co-op SHD Arch Gates
The new Co-op Super Heavy Duty Arch Gate is made from clear-coated galvanized tubing and has adjustable pin connectors. The tube frame is made from 13-gauge-by-2-inch tubing, while the gate is made from 14-gauge-by-2-inch tubing. Welded sleeve hinges make it stronger, and a plunger latch securely closes the gate. It is available in widths of either 4 feet (#156524) or 6 feet (#156526).

Sea Foam Motor Treatment
Sea Foam Motor Treatment (#1188034) is a petroleum-based product that helps clean internal fuel and oil system components. Sea Foam is EPA-registered and will not harm engine components, seals, gaskets, catalytic converters, or oxygen sensors. Because Sea Foam helps liquify gum and varnish deposits, it assists in quietening noisy valve lifters. By using Sea Foam to help eliminate varnish and deposit buildup, mechanics can more accurately diagnose mechanical problems. That is why Sea Foam has been so popular with professional mechanics for over 65 years.

Natural Stride Hip and Joint Supplement
Natural Stride Hip and Joint Supplement for dogs combines two of the most researched and effective ingredients currently available to fight arthritis and hip dysplasia. The highest level of ingredients per dosage ensures that your pet will get the most benefits possible out of any supplements. Its combination of cetyl myristoleate, glucosamine HCL and sulfate, MSM, vitamin C, yucca, and hyaluronic acid synergistically works to help alleviate stiffness and pain. Available in powder, 150 grams (#6804405); 30-count, vet-strength chews (#6804406); 90-count, vet-strength chews (#6804407); 30-count, regular-strength chews (#6804408); and 90-count, regular-strength chews (#6804409).
For grazing cattle in the Southeast, warmer weather signals the onset of fly season, which typically runs in our area from the last frost in the spring to just after the first frost in the fall. These external parasites can be quite costly in terms of lost production, treatment expenses, and disease transmission.

The three major species of concern are houseflies, face flies, and horn flies. Of these, horn flies are by far the most costly. This small, black insect is about the size of a grain of rice and spends the majority of its life on the back, shoulders, and belly of its host, feeding in a head-down position.

Horn flies emerge in the spring when average daily temperatures reach 65 degrees for a period of at least two weeks. Having a life cycle of only 10 to 20 days, the adult female leaves her host only long enough to lay eggs in fresh manure pats. Each female can lay up to 500 eggs during her lifespan, allowing populations to increase at a rapid pace. The economic threshold is around 200 horn flies per animal, and when left uncontrolled, as many as 4,000 per animal may be observed.

The pain and irritation often cause cattle to alter grazing patterns and expend energy attempting to dislodge the flies, resulting in decreased weight gain and milk production. The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates horn flies cost cattle producers nearly $1 billion per year in lost production.

Fortunately, farmers have several effective options for horn fly control: insecticide ear tags, pour-ons, back rubbers treated with insecticides, premix sprays, and feed-through insect growth regulators (IGRs). The most convenient of these is a cattle vitamin/mineral supplement containing an IGR, which eliminates the stress, labor, and expense of handling cattle.

Feed-through IGRs prevent horn fly eggs from developing into adults. The compound passes unaffected through the animal’s digestive tract, ending up in the manure, where it kills fly larvae. For successful fly control, IGR products must be consumed daily in adequate quantities so that all manure contains effective levels.

By using Co-op Fly Control mineral as part of a complete program, producers can gain significant benefits beyond the elimination of these pests. For example, forages consumed by grazing cattle can be deficient in several essential minerals regardless of season. Co-op Fly Control minerals help bridge that gap and meet the animal’s requirements for phosphorus, copper, zinc, and selenium, which are required for growth and reproduction efficiency.

Here are some tips to make the most effective use of Co-op Fly Control minerals:

• Begin feeding before flies appear in the spring.
• Offer minerals in a covered feeder, one for every 15-20 cows.
• Place feeders near watering or loafing areas.
• Check consumption levels throughout the summer; move feeders closer to or further from water/loafing areas as needed.
• If starting an IGR program mid-season, use an appropriate spray or pour-on to quickly reduce numbers of adult flies.

Co-op offers a complete line of fly control minerals to meet most any production program. Contact your local livestock experts for specific recommendations.

**Minerals are convenient fly control option**
Landowners can benefit from having their most abundant natural resource — trees — harvested

It’s harvest time at the Shull farm in Mountain City. As Ray Howard and his crew get to work, sounds of machinery fill the air — not tractors or combines, but rather a skidder, bulldozer, knuckle boom loader, and chainsaws. In this hilly forest setting, it’s the timber that is being harvested.

And Ray, owner of Ray Howard Logging, has been contracting with private landowners in Tennessee and North Carolina to cut hardwoods and pines on their properties for 25 years.

“My grandpa on my mom’s side got me into sawmilling,” says Ray, a certified professional logger and an uncle of Tri-State Growers, Inc., Manager Clint Robinson. “I did that for a few years before I got into logging full time. It’s hard work, but it’s provided me with a steady income.”

On this particular job at the Shull farm, Ray and crew are in the midst of “select-cutting” timber from some 185 acres. In one instance, the skidder pulls a massive 94-foot-long white oak up a hill and places it in position to be saved into 16-foot-long sections. Each log is then lifted by the boom into the back of a logging truck for transport to a sawmill 30 miles away in North Carolina.

Ray does business with multiple mills in the area, including some pulp facilities where he markets timber too small for the sawmills. He says that the sawing operations will further cut the wood and ship it to places like China for furniture production, Italy to make oak barrels for wine storage, and various locales in the U.S. and abroad for construction-related purposes.

“I pay the landowner for their timber,” explains Ray, who purchases fuel, tires, oil and other supplies from Tri-State Growers. “Then I sell it to the sawmill. The object of the game is to sell it to the mill for more than what you gave to the landowner. You have to factor in fuel and equipment costs. There’s a lot you have to consider, and it’s a big investment. A skidder alone can cost up to $200,000.”

What many people may not realize is the equally big impact — to the tune of $21 billion — that logging and the forest industry have on Tennessee’s economy. The Volunteer State consistently ranks in the top three states in U.S. lumber production, and the most recent figures show that timber sales alone generated $305 million in 2012.

“Landowners shouldn’t overlook their forest resources,” says Jere Jeter, assistant commissioner and state forester with the Tennessee Department of Agriculture. “Sometimes, they look at their row crops as the cash crops they need to be the most concerned about, but there’s also money in their trees. Farmers need to make sure that they’re managing trees just as well as row crops.”

John Shull, whose family has had timber cut on its land “for several generations,” concurs with Jere’s assessment.

“Timber is an agricultural crop,” says John, a Tri-State Growers director. “You should care for it like you would your cattle or corn. If you leave your trees standing for too long, they’re not as marketable. You’ve got to give those younger trees more room and more light to...
help them grow at a faster rate.”

John’s last point reflects one reason he favors going the “select-cut” route — where smaller trees are left to grow for cutting at a future date — for timber production. Another is the steady income stream it can provide over certain increments of time.

“I’m not an advocate of going in and cutting everything that’s big enough to make a toothpick,” he says. “I think there should be a size limit; that way, every 20 to 25 years you can come back and harvest trees again. If you cut everything down, it could be 50 years or more before you can harvest again.”

Jere, on the other hand, points out that scientific research also supports “clear-cutting,” in which every tree is cut on the acreage being logged.

“There comes a time when the stand needs to be liquidated, and new forest will come up from stump sprouts and seeds that are still on the forest floor,” he explains. “The only thing those seeds need is for the canopy to be opened up and the sunlight to hit the forest floor for a new stand to start. Shade-intolerant species like oaks and hickories are usually the best for this.

“Now, that doesn’t preclude some select harvest occurring between clear-cuts. But the very best way to manage quality hardwoods is actually through clear-cutting.”

Ray says it’s “up to the landowner” as to what practice he and his crew will use with their logging. Before a single tree is cut, though, he recommends that landowners meet with a local forester.

“For a fee, a forester will come in and look at, or cruise, your timber to give you an assessment of whether or not it’s ready to be harvested and how it should be harvested,” says Ray. “They’ll give you a footing sheet that tells how many feet of each species you’ve got in your forest. Then, they’ll price it for you and make a referral to someone who can take you through the process of selling the timber and getting it cut.”

Jere adds that investing in the services of a forester can be an economic windfall.

“Many times,” he explains, “landowners can actually receive more money from a timber sale than otherwise simply because a forester can give them potential buyers through a competitive process and get the best value for the timber on a given day.”

Once the timber is ready to cut, Jere recommends employing someone who has completed the state’s Master Logger Program. Started in 1992, the educational initiative is a partnership among the Tennessee Forestry Association, University of Tennessee Extension, and Tennessee Department of Agriculture.

“We refer landowners to loggers who are on that list,” says Jere. “A lot of sawmills, pulp mills, and paper mills are requiring their loggers to be master loggers before they can bring wood to their facilities.”

And Ray believes that these Tennessee hardwoods and pines will continue to be in demand.

“There’s always going to be a need for wood products,” he says. “Hopefully, we’ll have enough loggers from the younger generation to help fill that need and enough landowners who want their timber harvested.”

For more information about the logging industry in Tennessee, visit www.tnforestry.com or www.tennessee.gov/agriculture/forestry.

Shoers of sawdust fill the air as a hydraulic chainsaw slices through a log.

Tips from UP on marketing timber

University of Tennessee Extension Forester David Mercker recommends these steps for landowners interested in marketing timber:

(1) See a professional forester — Professional foresters have four-year degrees in forestry and have dedicated their careers to practicing sustainable woodland stewardship. They know how woodlands grow, timber value, market conditions, local loggers, and wildlife.

(2) Begin with a plan — Woodland plans involve a series of steps to help in managing timber and are invaluable in continuity when the property passes to heirs or new owners. Most plans list landowner goals, stand descriptions, recommendations, implementation timetable, and maps.

(3) Confirm property boundaries — Some property boundaries may be clear while others may be vague or nonexistent and should be discussed with adjoining landowners. The boundary must be clearly designated with highly visible paint or flagging to help loggers avoid cutting or damaging a neighbor’s timber. Tennessee imposes penalties for accidentally or intentionally cutting trees that belong to someone else.

(4) Select, mark, measure, and appraise the timber to be harvested — Know what you’re selling. The forester will follow your objectives in designating which trees will be harvested. Included in this step is the measurement of wood volume to be harvested — either by board feet or weight.

(5) Solicit sealed bids — Expose the sale to a wide range of potential purchasers within 60 miles: master loggers, timber buyers and brokers, and local sawmills. Potential bidders are sent a prospectus that includes a volume summary, terms of the sale, and maps. At a specific date and location, sealed bids are opened and the contract awarded.

(6) Prepare a contract — Selling timber in Tennessee without a contract is illegal. A contract is a form of protection for the landowner and the successful bidder. Most reputable timber firms appreciate contracts to confirm ownership and clarify terms of the sale. Your forester should provide a timber contract for you.

(7) Monitor the logging — Most loggers are trained through the Master Logger Program and receive continuing education. A list of Tennessee Master Loggers is maintained by the Tennessee Forestry Association and can be found at www.tnforestry.com.

(8) Prepare your future woodland — Immediately following a harvest, landowners should evaluate their property. This is because the proceeds from the timber sale are still available for reinvestment, access is handy because of newly built trails and roads, and woodland improvement isn’t hindered by vegetation regrowth.
Sitting among other proud parents at youth cattle shows around the region, Dyersburg’s Dale and Phyllis Kraus inevitably get asked, “So, which one is your son or daughter?”
“None of them,” they always reply.

Met with puzzled looks, the Krauses will usually laugh and then explain that they are at the show to support “their kids” all right — not biological children but rather a group of Dyer County 4-H and FFA members who are showing some of the couple’s registered Angus cattle.

Every year, Dale and Phyllis set aside several heifers from their quality K-Farm herd and allow a few area agricultural students to exhibit these animals as their own. It’s an entirely new experience for the Krauses, who had no background in showing cattle before embarking on this project five years ago.

“When they do come home, they enjoy being around the farm animals, but they didn’t grow up showing cattle or anything. So we’ve loved the chance to work with these students and really take pride in seeing them succeed. They’re such a good group of kids, and they all give 110 percent and then some.”

Native to southern Illinois, the Krauses moved to Dyersburg in 1986 when Dale was transferred with his job at World Color Press, which closed in 2010. He grew up working on dairies for his uncle and a father-son farming team who were close friends, instilling a love of animal agriculture from a young age. After moving to Tennessee, the Krauses also started a lawn care business, Green Thumb, “on the side,” and it quickly grew into a full-scale operation offering services like commercial mowing, erosion control, seeding, and sodding.

When the Krauses purchased their 27-acre farm in 2003, the land not only gave them room to store much of Green Thumb’s equipment but also afforded Dale the opportunity to fulfill his dream of raising cattle. They started with 10 registered Angus cows and a bull, and K-Farm’s cow herd now numbers nearly 30 head, with Dale’s goal to reach around 50 some day.

“To take the Gator and ride these hills, sit and watch the cattle ... I can’t ask for anything more than that. That’s my peace,” says Dale, who buys most of his farm supplies, including 14% Co-op Beef Devel- oper with Rumensin (#94176), from Gibson Farmers Cooperative’s Newbern store.

Dyersburg

For the past five years, Dyersburg’s Dale Kraus, right, and his wife, Phyllis, second from right, have been providing several show heifers from their registered Angus herd to area youth livestock exhibitors like, from left, siblings Hanna, Hunter, and Hayley Box and Anna Sartin. Hayley and Anna are members of Dyer County High School FFA and students in the agriculture program, which is spearheaded by teacher Lynsey Butler. The show heifers are housed in the barn behind them on site at the Kraus farm.

“When we started raising cattle in 2008, our kids were already grown,” says Phyllis, referring to son Josh, who lives near Memphis, and daughter Jessica, a Franklin resident.

The Krauses are in the business of selling bulls, with all of their heifers — including the show animals after each season ends — going back into the herd. Participating in the youth livestock shows is certainly an advantage in marketing their farm’s offerings, points out Dale.

“It’s a good way for us to show our farm and our cattle and be around others who have been doing this for 30 to 40 years,” he says. “The kind of education you can get from people like that, you just can’t find it out here. We’ve met a lot of people in the cattle market this way, and they’re good folks to be around.”

Dyersburg
Mainly, though, the Krauses say that being part of youth livestock projects has given them a chance to positively influence the lives of the students involved.

“We want to give these kids the opportunity to show, especially the ones who may not have an animal or anywhere to keep it,” says Phyllis. “It’s not just about getting our name out there. There’s dedication that goes into caring for these animals, and we love sharing that experience with these young people and watching them grow.”

Lynsey Butler, who heads up Dyer County High School’s impressive livestock education program, says the relationship with the Krauses has been a “win-win” for everyone involved.

“The Krauses want nothing in return from this but to enjoy working with the kids who show their cows,” says Lynsey, who is also the school’s FFA adviser. “They not only go to most of the shows, but they come to our alumni meetings, they come to our school functions, and they enjoy watching these kids excel in other things, too. They’ve made bonds and friendships that will last a lifetime.”

Even though the school has its own herd of registered Charolais cattle that the students can show, Lynsey says K-Farm’s Angus animals offer a different option for the more than 20 students who exhibited cattle last year. Among those is 16-year-old Anna Sartin, now in her second year of showing Kraus cattle.

“I love being around the animals, and the shows are a lot of fun,” says Anna. “But I also enjoy the chance to work with my cow as we get ready for the season, learning all the techniques it takes to do well in the show ring. It’s a big responsibility and teaches you to respect the animals.”

The Krauses have selected three show heifers for the coming season, one for Anna and the other two for sisters Hayley and Hanna Box. Hayley, also 16, has her eyes set on being a veterinarian some day and says that showing cattle gives her a chance to explore the scientific side of animal agriculture.

“It’s fun to show,” says Hayley, “but I also love working with the cattle — learning about the vaccinations, pregnancy tests, AI [artificial insemination], how to read EPDs [expected progeny differences] — all that. At one of the shows, I won a scholarship to the University of Tennessee at Martin, and I’m using it to take an AI class this month.”

For her little sister Hanna, 13, exhibiting cattle has not only taught her techniques to succeed in the show ring but also inspired her to want to share those skills with others.

“You learn so much about showing, and then you can teach the younger kids,” says Hanna. “It’s fun to see them get excited about it and learn how to do things the right way.”

Showing cattle isn’t easy, the girls readily admit. There are long hours and lots of hard work. The events are usually held in hot weather, and students are required to keep up their grades and make up missed schoolwork when they’re away at shows.

“These kids are gaining so many life skills and life lessons that they don’t even know they’re learning,” says Lynsey. “It’s much more than bringing home a blue ribbon. The responsibility and commitment that it takes to show cattle will be something that will benefit them as they get older. As young as they are, I’ve been proud to see that this could have positive effects on their lives down the road.”

Since neither Dale nor Phyllis had prior experience in showing cattle, they’re getting educated right along with the Dyer County students.

“We’re not afraid to get out there and help their animals ready,” says Phyllis. “We don’t take any of that away from the kids, but if they need us to wash, blow-dry, feed, or anything, we’re right there with them.”

Anna, Hayley, and Hanna say that while they may have had the opportunity to show cattle without the Krauses’ help, the couple’s generosity has made the experience so much richer. In addition to providing the animals, Dale and Phyllis have also built a lighted, covered barn complete with working facilities, grooming equipment, and washing stations for the students to use on their farm. During the height of show season in the summer and fall, the girls visit the farm several times a week to work with their animals and prepare for competition.

“I’m very thankful for what they do for us,” says Anna. “We have acres at home, so we could make it possible to have show cattle, but it would be a lot more difficult. If we’re out here late at night, there are lights, and when it’s hot or raining, we have this covering. It’s just a blessing to have this.”

The Krauses, in turn, say it’s a blessing to have the chance to work with the outstanding young people involved in these livestock projects even though it means some commitment and sacrifice on their end. For Dale, in particular, it’s a good excuse to put away the stress of his job and simply enjoy life for a while.

“I’m a workaholic, so this is a way to force me to be home at a certain time to hook up the trailer and go to the shows,” he says. “It’s relaxing. You sit in a lawn chair. You help the kids if you can. You walk around the fair. You might get a few phone calls related to work, but the rest of the time’s good. I wouldn’t trade these experiences for anything.”
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THE RATION for the PASSION
Mike and Serena Thomas of Adamsville aren’t kidding around about their preference for these active, low-maintenance meat goats

Mike and Serena Thomas beam with pride as they watch their “babies” romp and play, enjoying spring’s first sunny day.

The family’s front yard, a fenced play and feeding area equipped with a jungle gym and balance beam, bustles with nearly 40 baby Kiko goats and their mamas.

The barely 2-week-old kids are jumping, skipping, spinning, climbing, and tussling. Then most of them snuggle together for a siesta in the sun while the mama goats gather around the hay trough and mineral feeder, knowing they need to get in a quick snack before their youngsters wake up with empty bellies.

Well on their way to building a herd of registered Kikos, the Adamsville farmers can’t help but smile as their first group of purebred kids frolic.

“We fell in love with Kikos,” says Serena. “We can’t say enough wonderful things about them; their hardiness and maternal instincts are exceptional.”

Five years ago, after the Adamsville family built their dream home on their 25-acre Box Elder Farm, they began discussing what kind of livestock would fit both their busy lifestyle and their rolling acreage. Serena and Owen wanted goats, known for their curious, playful, and affectionate nature, but Mike, whose mother raised dairy goats, knew the animals could be a handful.

Unsure of which type to choose, they bought a dozen or so varying breeds, including a few Kikos. Within a year, the New Zealand variety had won over the family.

Since both Hardin County natives work fulltime — Serena at Deaconess Home Care, a home health agency in Selmer, and Mike with the Tennessee Department of Transportation for 28 years — the couple was thrilled to find a breed that matched so perfectly with their schedules.

“Kikos just stood out to us as the best for part-time farmers,” says Serena. “Their self-sufficiency makes them very low-maintenance.”

Among the characteristics the Thomases appreciated about Kikos were that they need very little assistance in birthing, have fewer hoof problems than other breeds, and are less prone to parasites. This spring, five years after buying their first goats, the Thomases’ herd numbers nearly 70, including 33 kids from 18 does with five more due to deliver soon (does usually have more than one.)

“The Kikos are such good mothers,” explains Serena. “Right after the kids are born, the mothers get them up and nursing. Some of the others we’ve had, whether it be brush goats or whatever, you had to wait for the mother to bond with that baby. We’ve seen that it’s instant with the Kikos.”

The Thomases, who were Mid-South Farmers Cooperative customers before its change to an agronomy-based business, now buy supplies at Stockdale’s in Selmer. They credit Barry Gray, Tennessee...
Middle Tennessee hosts 2014 AKGA national convention

Tennessee farmers interested in learning more about Kikos won’t have to travel far this year for the American Kiko Goat Association’s national convention and breeders’ showcase sale. The event will be held on Friday and Saturday, May 30 and 31, at Tennessee State University in Nashville and the Middle Tennessee State University’s Tennessee Livestock Center in Murfreesboro.

“Tennessee is a good choice for the convention since the state rates second in the country for goat production,” stresses Barry. “Goat is the most consumed red meat on the planet. Even the consumption of goat meat in this country is on the rise; in fact, the U.S. has to import goat from Australia and New Zealand to meet the demand. So now might be a good time for farmers to consider or reconsider raising goats.”

The national convention will begin with a field day on Friday at TSU’s Agricultural Research & Education Center in Nashville. On Saturday, presentations, futurity, and the breeders’ sale will be held at Tennessee Livestock Center on MTSU’s campus in Murfreesboro.

For more information about the events, call 254-423-5914, email AKGaconvention@gmail.com, or visit www.kikogoats.com.

Owen’s 4-H chickens enjoy the shade under one of the climbing areas built by Mike, who says a reason that his family wanted goats was their playful spirit.
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Landowners urged to take action against wild hogs

As growing populations of feral swine, or wild hogs, keep causing economic damage for Tennessee farmers and landowners, wildlife officials are cracking down on the illegal transport of the animals within the state.

While hunting wild hogs on public lands was outlawed in the state two years ago, the Tennessee Department of Agriculture now requires extensive documentation to transport any hog if it appears to be wild, including approval by the state veterinarian, proof that the animal is free of disease, and movement authorization for animals being taken to slaughter.

What does a wild hog look like? Officials say it’s typically two to three feet tall and up to five feet long with a larger head and heavier shoulders compared to domesticated breeds. Wild hogs also have smaller, pointed, heavily furred ears, longer snouts, tusks, and straight tails.

According to Chuck Yoest, wild hog coordinator for the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA), feral swine cause extensive damage to crops and wildlife habitat, contribute to erosion and water pollution, and carry diseases harmful to humans, livestock, and other animals. The U.S. Department of Agriculture reports that costs related to wild hogs in recent years have been in the range of $1.5 billion annually.

“Wild hogs are a national problem, but they’ve only been a huge issue in Tennessee since about 2000,” says Yoest. “For years, it was believed that they could be controlled by hunting, but illegal stocking combined with the natural spread of the species has resulted in a population explosion in the state. Wild hog eradication is now one of TWRA’s top priorities.”

One of the main problems, he explains, is the staggering reproductive rate of today’s wild hogs, which sexually mature at 6 months of age. Sows can have up to three litters per year, giving birth to as many as eight piglets at a time.

Wild hogs have become such a problem nationwide that the USDA recently announced a $20 million effort to reduce the increasingly expensive damage the animals cause in rural areas. Under the new program, USDA will work directly with states to manage populations and test for diseases.

To help alleviate the problem in Tennessee, Yoest says TWRA, Tennessee Department of Agriculture, Tennessee Farm Bureau, and other partners have formed a Wild Hog Eradication Action Team (WHEAT) with three main goals: to stop the illegal stocking and movement of wild hogs, to control and eradicate wild hogs through trapping and killing, and to inform the public that wild hogs are a problem.

WHEAT shares these tips for landowners who suspect wild hogs on their property:

1. Be proactive. Quick action is absolutely necessary for wild hog control to be successful.
2. Identify signs of wild hogs. Rooting damage, tracks, wallows, and mud rubs on trees or posts all indicate the presence of wild hogs.
3. Educate yourself. If the presence of wild hogs is confirmed, these websites offer credible information on effective control: wildpiginfo.com, wildpiginfo.msstate.edu/wild-pig-resources.html, and www.extension.org/feral_hogs.
4. Begin wild hog control. Report new occurrences of wild hogs to a regional TWRA office. In addition to providing technical assistance, TWRA can supply you with a wild hog exemption that enables you to utilize most forms of control, including shooting at night and baiting.

If you suspect that you have wild hogs on your property, contact your regional TWRA office: West Tennessee, 731-423-5725; Middle Tennessee, 615-781-6622; Cumberland Plateau, 931-484-9571; and East Tennessee, 423-587-7037.

To obtain a movement authorization for transport of wild hogs, call the state veterinarian’s office at 615-837-5120.
Members of Tennessee’s top youth agricultural organizations, FFA and 4-H, recently elected new officers at conferences held in Nashville and Gatlinburg, respectively.

On March 23-26, the 86th Tennessee State FFA Convention attracted more than 2,000 students, advisors, and guests to the Gatlinburg Convention Center. The annual event celebrated chapter achievements and recognized students who will represent Tennessee at the National FFA Convention in October in Louisville, Ky.

Members of Tennessee FFA who were elected at the convention as 2014-15 officers are: President Kevin Robertson, Wilson Central FFA chapter; Secretary Nick Baker, Baxter; West Tennessee Vice President Elena Smith, Munford; Middle Tennessee Vice President Susan Cowley, Lincoln County; East Tennessee Vice President Coty Vannoy, Chuckey-Doak; Treasurer Amy Morgan, Cookeville; Reporter Victoria Utsman, Daniel Boone; and Sentinel Shelby Day, Oakland (Murfreesboro).

In Nashville on March 30-April 2, more than 400 youth, volunteer leaders, and Extension staff gathered for the 67th Annual Tennessee 4-H Congress. The theme of this year’s event was “Geared for Greatness,” and participants took part in legislative visits, educational tours, contests in public speaking, citizenship, leadership, poster, and essay, and the election of leaders for the coming year.

Elected to serve as the 2015 4-H Congress officers were Governor Tony Eskridge of Shelby County; Speaker of the Senate Haile Adams, Warren County; and Speaker of the House Andy Huffer, Moore County.
Small farmers to be honored in big way

Friday, May 9, is the deadline for nominations in Tennessee’s 10th Annual Small Farmer of the Year competition, winners of which will be honored during a luncheon at the 2014 Small Farm Expo on Thursday, July 17, at the Tennessee State University Agricultural Research and Education Center in Nashville.

Competition starts at the county level, with a winner in each of four categories earning the right to compete for statewide honors. The overall Tennessee Small Farmer of the Year winner will come from the state finalists.

“Purpose of the program is to recognize exemplary efforts of small farmers throughout the state,” says Christopher Robbins, Extension associate with TSU. Categories in the competition are best management practices, innovative marketing, alternative enterprises, and, new this year, most improved beginning small farmer.

Each nomination must include a typed letter, no longer than two pages, describing the nominee or operation and a nomination form signed by the nominator and/or nominee. Supplemental materials that include no more than two letters of support from sponsors and/or county officials are “strongly encouraged” by competition officials.

The farm operated by each nominee must be located in Tennessee, depend on family members for the majority of labor and/or management, be operated by a family who depends on farming for a significant but not necessarily majority of its income, and have direct or indirect gross annual sales of less than $250,000, based on the past three-year average.

For a nomination form and/or additional information on the competition, contact TSU’s Christopher Robbins at 615-792-5744 or crobbins@tnstate.edu.

UT Gardens’ Bloom Days offer workshops, family fun

More than 25 workshops will be offered for various skill levels during the University of Tennessee Gardens’ 2014 Bloom Days set for Saturday and Sunday, May 10 and 11, at UT’s Ag campus, just off Neyland Drive.

The popular annual event, billed as a “springtime tradition,” will also feature unique garden goods and crafts, live musical performances, and special children’s activities. Each mom attending on Mother’s Day will be given a free daylily “while supplies last.”

Hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day. Tickets are $8 at the gate for one day or $10 for both. Children under 12 are admitted free. Proceeds from the “rain-or-shine” event go to benefit the gardens.

Regional gardening experts will conduct the planned workshops, which include “Butterflies — Flying Flowers in the Garden,” “Gotta Have Shade,” “Art in the Gardens,” and “Secrets to Rose Success.”

Food vendors will set up shop both days, and live musical performances will be featured. Younger visitors can create “make-and-take” items at Kids’ Corner and visit the Insect Zoo and Butterfly House each day. Saturday will feature activities and a nutrition station sponsored by East Tennessee Children’s Hospital.

Visitors of all ages can take self-guided tours of the gardens to learn about some 4,000 annuals, perennials, herbs, tropical, trees, shrubs, vegetables, and ornamental grasses. Designated as the official botanical garden for Tennessee, the collections are part of UT’s Institute of Agriculture.

Visit utgardens.tennessee.edu for more information and a complete schedule of the weekend’s activities.
Clip, save, and serve

Salsa Bowls

What you will need:
- 8 taco shell bowls
- 2 pounds ground beef, cooked and drained
- 1 (12-ounce) bag shredded Mexican blend cheese
- Shredded lettuce, enough for 8 bowls
- 2 large ripe tomatoes, chopped
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 3 large jalapeno peppers, seeded and chopped
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 1 (6-ounce) can sliced black olives
- 1 (1-ounce) package taco seasoning

Linda Bain, Bethel Springs, Mid-South Farmers Cooperative

May 2014 winning recipe

Fiesta Lasagna

1 pound ground beef
½ cup chopped onion
1 (16-ounce) can refried beans
1 (15½-ounce) can mild chili beans
1 (14½-ounce) can Mexican stewed tomatoes, drained
1 cup salsa
1 (4-ounce) can chopped green chilies
1 envelope reduced-sodium taco seasoning
1 teaspoon dried oregano
1 teaspoon ground cumin
½ teaspoon garlic powder
1¾ cups shredded Monterey Jack cheese
1¼ cups shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese
¾ cup small-curd cottage cheese

Directions:
Bake bowls as directed on package. Put all salsa ingredients together in a saucepan and cook on medium heat until cooked down to a medium-thick sauce, making sure vegetables are tender. Mix in cooked ground beef. Cook for 15 minutes more. Fill bowls ⅔ full; add lettuce and cheese on top.

Note: Keep any remaining ingredients to make burritos later.

— Photo and food styling by Allison Morgan
Mini Mexican Quiches

1/4 cup butter or margarine, softened
1 (3-ounce) package cream cheese, softened
1 cup all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon salt
1 cup (4 ounces) shredded Monterey Jack cheese
1 (4-ounce) can chopped green chilies, drained
2 eggs
1/2 cup whipping cream
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper

Pour the first six ingredients into a greased 13-x-9-x-2-inch baking dish. Layer with three noodles and a third of the cottage cheese mixture and meat sauce. Repeat layers twice (dish will be full). Cover and bake at 350° for one hour. Uncover; spread with remaining sour cream. Sprinkle with reserved cheeses. Bake 10-12 minutes longer or until cheese is melted. Let stand for 20 minutes before serving. Yield: 12 servings.

Sarah Mangis
Madisonville
Foothills Farmers Cooperative

Mexican Casserole

1 pound lean ground beef
1 medium onion, chopped
1 medium bell pepper, chopped
1 (10- to 12-ounce) bag corn chips, divided
8 ounces shredded Cheddar cheese, divided
1 (10-ounce) can Rotel tomatoes (your choice of flavors)
1 (15-ounce) can chili beans
1 (10-ounce) can mushroom soup

Brown ground beef, onion, and pepper until meat is no longer pink; drain well. Line bottom of 9-x-12-inch casserole dish with half of corn chips; pour ground beef mixture over chips. Cover with half of shredded cheese. Combine Rotel, beans, and soup; pour over cheese layer. Sprinkle remaining cheese over bean mixture and top with remaining corn chips. Bake in preheated 375° oven until bubbly — approximately 30 minutes.

Note: A green salad and bread of your choice make this a complete meal.

June Thompson
Sweetwater
Foothills Farmers Cooperative

Mexican Bean Dish

1 pound ground beef
1 pound ground turkey
1 small onion, diced
1 stalk celery, diced
1/2 bell pepper, diced
Olive oil, to taste
1 (16-ounce) can diced tomatoes
2 tablespoons yellow mustard
3 tablespoons ketchup
1/4 cup brown sugar
Dash of Worcestershire sauce
Hot sauce and chili powder, to taste
1 teaspoon cumin, optional
1/4 cup red wine or beef broth
1 (16-ounce) can pork and beans, drained
1 (16-ounce) can red kidney beans, drained
1 (16-ounce) can northern beans, drained
1 (16-ounce) can pinto beans, drained

Cheese of your choice
Cook ground meat and drain grease. Sauté onions, celery, and peppers in olive oil. Add meat, tomatoes, and all other ingredients, except beans. Simmer 10-15 minutes. Add all beans to mixture. Heat thoroughly. Sprinkle cheese on top.

Ruthie Harrell
Dickson
Dickson Farmers Cooperative

Mexican Cheese Soup

1 cup chopped onion
4 cups diced potatoes
4 chicken bouillon cubes
1 can cream of chicken soup
1 quart water
1/2 pound mild Mexican Velveeta cheese, cubed
1/2 pound American cheese, grated

Combine first five ingredients; cook until tender. Remove from heat. Add cheeses. Stir until smooth and cheeses are melted.

Rebekah Tai Melton
Livingston
Overton Farmers Cooperative

Chicken Enchiladas

12 corn tortillas
2 cups canned mild enchilada sauce
2 cups diced cooked chicken or turkey, white meat
1/4 cup sliced black olives
2 tablespoons slivered almonds
1/2 cup grated mozzarella cheese, more if needed

2 cups plain low-fat yogurt or 2 cups sour cream
1/4 cup chopped green onions
Preheat oven to 350°. Soften tortillas by wrapping in wax paper and microwaving for 30-40 seconds or 2 minutes or by wrapping in foil and warming in conventional oven for 10 minutes.

Mix enchilada and tomato sauces. Mix chicken, olives, and almonds with about 1/2 cup sauce. Spoon 1/4 cup of chicken mixture down center of each warm tortilla. Roll and place seam side down in a 9-x-13-inch baking dish. Cover with remaining sauce and grated cheese. Bake, uncovered, for 15-20 minutes. Before serving, spoon yogurt or sour cream down center of dish and sprinkle with green onions.

Yield: Six servings.

Irene Greer
Jamestown
Fentress Farmers Cooperative

July will be bursting with blueberries

With fresh blueberries at the peak of the season, July is the perfect month to feature them as the theme for our “What’s cookin’?” column. Pick your favorite blueberry recipe and send it to us for consideration. The person submitting the recipe judged best will be named Cook-of-the-Month for June and receive $10. Others sending recipes chosen for publication will receive $5. Each winner will also receive a special “What’s cookin’?” certificate.

Monday, June 2, is the deadline for your blueberry recipes. Don’t forget: Only recipes with complete, easy-to-follow instructions will be considered for publication. Several recipes are disqualified each month because they do not contain all the information needed to prepare the dishes successfully. Recipes featured in “What’s cookin’?” are not independently tested, so we must depend on the accuracy of the cooks sending them. Always use safe food-handling, preparation, and cooking procedures. Send entries to: Recipes, Tennessee Cooperative, P.O. Box 3003, LaVergne, TN 37086. You can submit more than one recipe in the same envelope. You can also e-mail them to: amorgan@ourcoop.com. Be sure to include your name, address, telephone number, and the Co-op with which you do business. Recipes that appear in the “What’s cookin’?” column will also be published on our website at www.ourcoop.com.
Hampton

For almost 25 years, hungry folks have flocked to Shirley’s Home Cooking for plenty of honest-to-goodness country food

Peggy Henderson could have taken her two college-age visitors from Texas and Colorado to one of dozens of restaurants near her Johnson City home. But she wanted to give them “a true taste of Southern food,” so the trio made the 30-minute drive into neighboring Carter County.

Their destination? Shirley’s Home Cooking near Hampton.

Shirley’s has been dishing out heaping helpings of made-from-scratch country comfort fare since 1990, and folks drive from all over to get their fill of crispy, juicy fried chicken, tangy cornbread salad, and a variety of meats, vegetables, and decadent desserts — all served family style. Peggy has been coming here almost from the start, and judging from the happy expressions on the faces of her guests after the meal, she made a popular decision.

“It was fantastic!” exclaims Katherine Wyerick, the Texan in the group. “I was a little intimidated when they started bringing out all of the food, but I tried a little of everything and am stuffed. I’m going to be in the area for several weeks, so I’ll definitely be back.”

Hearing praise like this always brings a smile to the restaurant’s namesake, Shirley Sharpe, who 24 years ago took a leap of faith along with husband Grant that their former service station and small grocery on Highway 321 could attract hungry Appalachian Region diners. Sadly, Grant passed away in February 2013, but his spirit remains alive in the restaurant through photos and memorabilia from his days in the military, including the Purple Heart he earned in World War II.

Shirley runs the eatery today with son Jeff, daughter-in-law Angie (who does most of the cooking), and their group of loyal employees who are “like family” — in some cases they are family. Hours are 4 to 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday and noon to 4 p.m. Sunday. Breakfast is served on Saturday and Sunday from 8 to 11 a.m.

“When we started back in ’90, we only had three tables,” says Shirley, who lives next door. “Now, we can seat up to 300 people and have added the gift shop. It’s just been amazing how the restaurant has grown. I never dreamed it would do this good.”
Shirley had operated a “very small” grill when the prior business was open, and a trip to visit relatives in Washington, D.C., planted the seed for Shirley’s Home Cooking.

“My brother-in-law took us to a family-style restaurant that had the round tables and the lazy Susans,” she says. “I thought it was so neat how they brought all of this food out at once … it stuck with me. When we were talking about what to do after we closed the service station, I decided I would start a family-style restaurant here.”

Located on a curvy stretch of 321 across from scenic Watauga Lake, Shirley’s isn’t a place that most people just happen upon. Initially, the restaurant attracted mostly locals. But as word spread about the tasty food and family-friendly atmosphere, it wasn’t long before Shirley’s was filled with diners from East Tennessee and neighboring areas of North Carolina and Virginia.

“I think a key for us is that we’re consistent with our food,” Jeff Sharpe says. “A lot of our customers tell us that’s the reason they keep coming back time after time. They know we keep the same lineup of dishes, and they know everything will always taste the same. It’s all about consistency, and that extends to the way we treat our customers. Good customer service is just as important as the food, in my opinion.”

And don’t think that folks won’t notice even the slightest deviation from the norm, Shirley stresses.

“I had decided to stop serving cabbage,” she says. “Well, the first night that it wasn’t on the menu, a couple came to me and said, ‘We drove all the way from Kingsport just for cabbage, and you didn’t have any!’ So, I learned my lesson to not fix what’s not broken.”

Jeff explains that cooking the Shirley’s way involves preparing food “how Grandma and Grandpa did it.”

“We don’t do anything radically different or special as far as seasoning what we cook,” he says. “Our tried-and-true ingredients are salt, pepper, butter, sugar, flour, and oil.”

Aromas and flavors that have been a part of country kitchens for generations are what put “home” in Shirley’s Home Cooking.

“We don’t buy anything processed,” Shirley says. “All of our food is homemade; we don’t get it out of the freezer, put it in the oven, and heat it up. Now, nine out of 10 customers would never notice if you served a frozen peach cobbler, but we would. It wouldn’t be true to what we’re all about.”

Ask Shirley’s regulars about their favorite part of the feast, and two items invariably pop up: fried chicken and cornbread salad. The perfectly coated, crispy, flavorful, boneless chicken breasts are cooked in a canola oil-filled tilt skillet that can hold 65 pieces at a time.

“When I tell people that I work for Shirley’s, one of the first things I’ll usually hear is, ‘I love their chicken!’” says Becky Dugger, an 18-year employee who started as a dishwasher and now helps Angie with food prep. “And a lot of people ask for our cornbread salad recipe. The secret to it is to make really good cornbread — that’s what kicks it over the top.”

While Arles Pease and wife Louise of Kingsport agree that the chicken can’t be beat, they say the entire experience of visiting Shirley’s makes it special.

“We come here pretty often,” says Louise. “Well, the first night that it wasn’t on the menu, a couple came to me and said, ‘We drove all the way from Kingsport just for cabbage, and you didn’t have any!’ So, I learned my lesson to not fix what’s not broken.”

Shirley’s Cornbread Salad recipe

1 cup mayonnaise
1 cup ranch dressing
2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
¼ cup sugar
1 teaspoon celery seed
1 large cucumber
1 onion
2 tomatoes
1 green pepper
1 stalk celery
2 tablespoons sweet pickle juice
1 pan baked cornbread
Mix mayonnaise, ranch dressing, apple cider vinegar, sugar, and celery seed in a bowl.
Chop up cucumber, onion, tomatoes, green pepper, and celery and add to bowl.
Add pickle juice and mix.
Bake cornbread and let cool. Crumble and pour mixture over cornbread.
Slightly mix without stirring.

Come on, urges Shirley, and bring a healthy appetite. She hopes to be feeding friends for years to come.

“People ask me when I’m going to retire,” she says. “Why would I want to do that? I’m doing what I love, I’m meeting great friends who enjoy our food, and I only have to work three days a week to make a living. You can’t do better than that.”

Shirley’s Home Cooking is located at 3266 Highway 321 in Hampton. For more information, visit www.shirleyhomecooking.com, www.facebook.com/shirleyhomecooking, or call 423-768-2092.
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Auctioneer: Jarvene Shackleford

His Full Sister Sells!
Anglers who head to Pebble Isle Marina on the Tennessee River at New Johnsonville on Saturday, June 21, for some serious fishing will have more on their minds than landing a trophy bass, though they’d love to have that, too.

In large part, they’ll be fishing for Hope — as in Hope Center Ministries in Waverly, a highly regarded, spiritual-based recovery retreat for alcoholics and drug addicts. It’s a cause near and dear to the hearts of many folks in the Co-op family, especially Humphreys Farmers Cooperative Manager Randy Hite, who has passion for and personal interest in the Hope Center program.

“I organized this bass tournament in 2010 to thank Hope Center for saving my son’s life,” says Randy. “We’re pleased that the tournament is still going strong and are looking for another good turnout this year. It’s definitely for a great cause.”

Nine Co-ops headquartered in Middle and West Tennessee are among sponsors of the upcoming fifth Hope Center Ministries Bass Tournament. Winners will be determined by tournament officials based on the weight of the bass they catch. More than $10,000 in guaranteed cash prizes will be awarded with only large-mouth, small-mouth, and spotted bass weighed for the competition. First-place finisher will receive $5,000, second place $1,000, third place $700, fourth place $600, and fifth place $500.

Registration fee for the tournament is $150 per boat (no more than two people in each) until 5 p.m. on Friday, June 20. After that, it’s $160. Registration can be completed online at www.hopecenterbasstournament.com. To register and pay by phone, call Brent Parker at 931-264-0201. For additional information, contact Randy Hite at 931-622-1344.

Sponsoring Co-ops for this year’s tournament are Benton Farmers, Camden; Carroll Farmers, Huntington and Trezevant; Dickson Farmers, Dickson; First Farmers, Lexington, Decaturville, Henderson, and Savannah; Henry Farmers, Paris and Cottage Grove; Humphreys Farmers, Waverly, Centerville, and Erin; Maury Farmers, Columbia, Mt. Pleasant, and Spring Hill; Montgomery Farmers, Clarksville; and Perry Farmers, Linden and Hohenwald.

**June 21 bass tournament will benefit Hope Center**

Tennessee’s electric cooperatives are alerting their customers about a telephone scam in which callers pose as a co-op or utility employee and threaten to shut off service unless immediate payment is provided. The scam artists ask that customers use a reloadable debit card, prepaid gift card, or online payment service like PayPal.

“The calls sound official, and the caller ID may even display the utility name,” says David Callis, executive vice president and general manager of the Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association. “This is particularly harmful to consumers because there is no way to track or recover the money.”

Officials stress that electric co-ops will never call members to request credit card, banking, or other financial information over the telephone. They will also never threaten immediate disconnection unless payment is made or ask to enter your home unless you initiate the request.

“If in doubt, hang up immediately and look up your electric co-op’s phone number,” says Callis. “Call it directly to be certain you are dealing with an official representative.”

**Electric co-ops warn customers of utility scam**

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Every Farmer Has A Story | Harold Cox

Brick by brick

Construction vocation helps Benton County’s Harold Cox build a strong foundation of farming, family, and faith

H arold Cox had every intention of being the fifth generation of his family to farm in Benton County. But when he graduated from high school in 1961 — in the midst of an agricultural slump — he turned to bricklaying to provide the foundation for his lifelong dream.

Within a few years, Harold saved up enough money to buy a 300-acre farm in Holladay, just down the road from his homeplace. He and his young wife, Judy, a teacher and farm girl from neighboring Decatur County, built a house and started a family: daughter Karen and son Kevin. The children loved working the land, too, and the entire family pitched in to raise corn, soybeans, and hay.

“I was born to be a farmer, but I’ve had to do other things,” says Harold. “A man will do what he has to do to build his dream.”

Twenty years of hard work laying brick helped Harold gain a firm financial footing to begin farming full time. With his father, Leonard, in failing health, Harold also began raising row crops on his family’s nearby 500-acre farm and added a 50-sow, farrow-to-finish hog operation on his own land.

“The hog business is a seven-day-a-week, 500-days-a-year job, but it was good in those days,” explains Harold. “I got kids through college with it. I’ve always been proud that I was able to get them through school [one doctorate and two master’s degrees] without debt.”

Nowadays, even though Harold rents most of his land to a young local farmer, he still raises about 100 acres of Bermudagrass hay with Karen’s husband, Wayne Jackson.

“I didn’t realize it was such a job when I got into it,” says Harold. “I’m now haling around 700 to 1,000 tons of dry hay a year. You can cut it practically every 30 days.”

The Coxes’ strong work ethic and commitment to family have made them valuable members of their community. They are members of Flatwoods Baptist Church in Holladay, where Karen, Wayne, and their children, Evan, 6, and Anna, 3, recently built a house on her grandparents’ homestead. The couple has also refurbished a barn built by Harold’s dad and granddad.

Son Kevin, manager of Tennessee Farmers Cooperative’s Animal Health Department and staff veterinarian, is following in his dad’s footsteps with a 70-acre horse farm next door to his parents.

“We are incredibly blessed to be able to live on this beautiful land and be surrounded by our children and grandchildren,” says Judy. Harold’s devotion to family has also defined his hobbies. He learned woodworking in high school and has made cedar bowls, mantel clocks, his kitchen cabinets, and a bedroom set for Kevin throughout the years. But when his daughter was expecting the Coxes’ first grandchild, he was inspired to build a rocker fashioned after one he and Judy bought when they first married.

“Everything on the rocker is at an angle,” laughs Harold. “It took me all winter to make the first one.”

Since Evan’s birth, Harold has crafted about 15 rockers, mostly for family and friends, but he’s sold a few, too. He uses wood from his farm, preferring walnut and white oak.

“I like to woodwork,” says Harold. “The only two things I really care about much are deer hunting — mostly because I like to eat ‘em — and working with wood. It’s just been a dream of mine all through my life.”

Each fall, Judy keeps the entire family busy with her booming pumpkin business that she operates out of the refurbished barn.

“When the kids were little, I always grew some pumpkins,” explains Judy, “and since then, it has just steadily grown.”

Now she plants nearly three acres and has customers return each year because of the variety and choices she offers.

“Some want to go out to the patch and pick them. Others appreciate that we have a nice selection available in the barn,” says Judy. “Karen is very artsy and often has neat arrangements and displays, and people want to buy pumpkins to replicate what she’s done.”

The couple also honors their heritage with a collection of antique tractors. Harold had his father’s old Allis Chalmers restored and then bought a similar one. Not wanting Judy to feel left out, he bought a restored John Deere reminiscent of the one she drove as a child on her family’s farm. They enjoy sharing their prized tractors at regional shows.

“For me, it’s been a very rewarding life,” says Harold, smiling as he watches his grandchildren gallop across the field to the barn on their stick horses. “We’ve had our share of ups and downs . . . more ups than downs. I married a wonderful woman and have a great faith in the Lord, and that will get you through anything.”
Although he rents out most of the 1,000 acres on his family’s farm, Harold still raises about 100 acres of Bermudagrass hay and stores it in a shed that was refurbished from his 50-sow, farrow-to-finish hog business.

— Photo by Sarah Geyer
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