5 Around the Dome
— Dwayne O’Dell
Our Director of Government Relations keeps us up to speed on the latest legislative issues

7 The Zipline
— Zippy DuVall
Viewpoints from our AFBF President

9 County Corner
News from our county boards from across the state

11 From the Halls of the US Congress
— Representative Carol Miller, 1st District

12 Women’s Leadership Communications Bootcamp Graduate
— Maggie Blankenship, WVFB YF&R Committee Member

14 Growing Young
— Michelle Wilfong
News from the Young Farmer and Rancher Chair

15 WVU Update
— Educational Articles from the WVU University Extension and the WVU Davis College of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Design

20 The History of West Virginia’s Northern Panhandle
— Drew Manko, WVFB YF&R Committee Member

22 God, Farming, and Sourdough Bread...Stories from the Farm
— Susan Wilkins Taylor
Getting by with Faith and Family

23 2023 West Virginia Beef Expo Highlights

27 Allium Tricocum
— Michael Snyder
Slice of Life

30 Recipe Possibilities
Recipes to Inspire

31 Come Sit a Spell
Puzzles, Wit, and Wisdom

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web site: www.wvfarm.org
e-mail: contactus@wvfarm.org
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On the Cover: Wooland Treasure. Near Wagner Road in Upshur County. Photo by Al Tucker
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Photo Submissions

Hundred Acre’s Farm showing Scottish Highland Cattle in TN
Pictured: Lauren Weaver (Secretary/Treasurer of Wetzel County Farm Bureau & Daughter Lillian Quinn) and Rosie (highland)

3 Generations of Wilfongs
Taking a break from freeze branding
Pictured: Charles Wilfong, CW, and Charles Wilfong, II
I hope each of you are doing well and enjoying the spring weather.

Farmers today are doing more with less, thanks to innovation and technology. In fact, United States agriculture would have needed 100 million more acres 30 years ago to produce the same as today’s agriculturists. Smarter farm equipment, precision agricultural tools, and biotechnology are helping farmers care for their crops while using less water, fertilizer, and pesticides.

Agriculture has played a significant role in offsetting emissions beyond the farm gate. According to the EPA, land management practices alone removed 764 million metric tons of carbon dioxide in 2018. That is equal to taking 165 million cars off the road for a year.

In addition to biofuel production, farmers have constructed 132 percent more renewable energy sources over the last 5 years. These structures include geothermal, solar, windmills, and methane digesters. Per unit emissions are down 26 percent for the dairy industry, 25 percent for pork, and 15 percent for U.S. beef cattle farmers.

EPA has reported that U.S. greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture were nearly unchanged in 2021, even as overall emissions rose 6 percent. U.S. agriculture emissions totaled 598 million metric tons in 2021, compared to 597.3 million in 2020. Agriculture in this country accounts for 9.4 percent of total U.S. emissions and are often mistakenly targeted by extreme environmentalists as being the largest contributor to environmental issues. These EPA data prove their perception is not reality.

EPA has also announced new proposed emission standards for light, medium, and heavy-duty vehicles for 2027 and beyond. It sets limits on carbon dioxide and is strict enough to force manufacturers to expand electric vehicle offerings. EPA estimates its proposal would increase electric vehicles to 60 percent of light duty sales by 2032. AFBF opposes excessive increases in corporate average fuel economy standards that reduce availability and increased costs of trucks and vehicles for farmers. Additionally, EPA goals will decrease the use of ethanol and other biofuels, which will have a huge effect on producers of farm crops.

The U.S. beef cattle market remained red hot in mid-April. Boxed beef prices were over $290, with cash trade on fed cattle at $1.75-$1.80. Weekly slaughter rates were approximately 600,000 head. Questions remain on how long consumers will pay more for beef in comparison to other available proteins. Most economists predict continued upward movement in feeder cattle prices this year.

According to the Good Food Institute report, plant-based meat, egg, and dairy companies raised $1.19 billion in 2022, bringing the all-time investment to $7.78 billion since 1997. The U.S. market for plant-based foods is reported to be an $8 billion market. Congress has allocated $6 million for research and development for these products. FDA has given Upside Foods a regulatory green light for its lab cultivated chicken product. Worldwide, over 120 companies in 25 countries are exploring plant-based and cultivated meat production and marketing.

Finally, Governor Justice signed 326 bills, including major legislation on the Campus Self Defense Act, the state budget of $4.78 billion, the 21.5 percent reduction of personal income tax, the reorganization of DHHR, and increased pay for state employees. Other major legislation included increased PEIA costs for state employees and additional funding for teachers’ aides in public school grades 1 through 3. The 2023 Legislature considered many other bills, including carbon offset agreements for timberland owners, which will continue to be considered for taxation and regulation.

Life often brings changes, challenges, and circumstances. How we handle these issues makes all the difference in our future. President Abraham Lincoln said, “Most folks are about as happy as they make up their minds to be.”
Certainly, America is a great place to live and be happy. Oscar Wilde said, “Some cause happiness wherever they go; others whenever they go.” It has been well said that life is like photography. Use the negative to develop. Have a great day!
Generations of Sustainability

I’m a third-generation farmer. I love that it’s natural for farmers to speak of our calling in terms of generations. Just that word “generation” hints at a bigger story to tell. The story of how we adapt and change to keep fulfilling our calling and caring for our land. Sustainable practices are just what we do on the farm because we understand that we are caretakers of the land for a time. While some farmers may be the first generation in their family to care for the land, no one wants to be the last. I wouldn’t be the third generation on my farm, and there surely wouldn’t be a fourth to follow, if we still farmed the exact way my grandfather did. Now, I don’t mean any disrespect to my grandfather and all the hardworking generations that came before. They worked hard and did their best with the tools available to them. They didn’t have the chance to see the strides we could make thanks to innovation and technology. The last 40 years alone in agriculture have changed the landscape, for the better. I believe my father and grandfather would be very proud of how my son and I are restoring the land they passed on.

Agriculture gets a lot of attention in discussions about climate and sustainability, and unfortunately, some unfair blame as well. But the facts are clear, agriculture is just 10% of overall emissions in the U.S. according to the Environmental Protection Agency. That statistic just skims the surface of our sustainability gains and where we can go next. American farmers and ranchers are leading the world in climate-smart practices. From using smarter farm equipment and precision ag tools to embracing biotechnology, farmers today use less water, fertilizer and pesticides as they grow the food, fiber and fuel we all depend on.

For decades, farmers have adopted conservation practices that help us reduce water usage, turn the soil over less and keep nutrients in the fields. According to USDA, 90% of farmers have employed irrigation management and system updates to help conserve water. That same survey from USDA shows that more than 80% of farmland is being managed with reduced till or no till practices, and nearly two-thirds of farmers are using cover crops.

“Yes, sustainability is at the heart of what we do, and we aren’t finished yet.”

Farmers also play a leading role in growing the crops we turn into renewable fuel that increases our energy independence and reduces emissions. In 2021 alone, use of ethanol and biodiesel reduced annual GHG emissions by 95 million metric tons—that’s equal to taking 33 million cars off the road.

Again, that’s just part of the story. Sustainability isn’t a one-size-fits-all approach, but it does matter to farms of all sizes, in all regions. At Farm Bureau, we have collected stories from across the country to offer just a snapshot of how farmers are fulfilling our commitment to care for our land, air and water. Check out fb.org/sustainability and click through our interactive map to learn more. I’m pleased to report that we’re regularly adding stories to the map from farms across the country.

While agriculture’s overall share of emissions has held relatively steady in recent years, our productivity continues to increase. Just 30 years ago, it would have taken 100 million more acres to produce the same amount of crops that farmers are growing today.

Farmers are proud to meet the demands of our growing nation and world, but we cannot do this
work alone. We need partners in our sustainability work, from our shared public investment through farm bill programs to innovative programs led by food companies that treat farmers as partners. We also need a renewed commitment by our nation to invest in the research and development that will help future generations make strides that we can barely dream of today.

On Earth Day, and every day, I am proud to be the third generation entrusted to care for my family’s farmland. I know there are millions of farmers and farm families around the country who share that same feeling. Sustainability is at the heart of what we do and we aren’t finished yet. Together, we can ensure that generations to come answer the call to grow safe and sustainable food, fiber and fuel supplies for our nation and our world.

Vincent “Zippy” Duvall, a poultry, cattle and hay producer from Greene County, Georgia, is the 12th president of the American Farm Bureau Federation.
Gilmer County
Woodland Management Field Day a Great Success

On March 25, the Gilmer County Farm Bureau, the West Fork Conservation District, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) held a one-day event on woodlot management. The event was held at the Old Place Farm, home of Rick and Alice Sypolt. The field day was very well attended as nearly 25 people were present.

Rick Sypolt kicked things off by discussing common practices in invasive species control as well as sharing some of his own woodlot management techniques which included some basics on cruising timber and log tally/log scale forms.

Jesse King, county forester, then covered a range of topics including the implementation of Best Management Practices (BMP) and the dos and don’ts of securing a logger. Brandon Duckworth, District Conservationist with the NRCS finished up the indoor presentations by covering a variety of programs available to property owners such as the EQUIP Program, the Conservation Stewardship Program, Forest Management Plans, and the WV Managed Timberland Tax Incentive Program.

After the indoor portion, Rick Sypolt, with the help of Tom Snyder of Glenville State University, and Dr. William M. Healy, Certified Wildlife Biologist, led the group on a tour of the property.

Harrison County
Livestock Association Elimination Dinner

March 18, was the second annual Harrison County Livestock Association Elimination Dinner. It was a successful fundraiser with great food and lots of fun for all that attended. There are plans in Harrison County to build a Youth Livestock Facility. This project is gaining a lot of support from County Commissioners Susan Thomas, Patsy Trecost, and David Hinkle who attended the dinner, as well as former Senator Mike Romano who recently donated $29,000 from his economic account to help jump start the fundraising effort.
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Since the founding of our great nation, farming has established the shared values that shape our nation, that we hand down to each generation. Growing up I learned not to shy away from hard work, and to stay grounded and humble. These are the American principles that guide my own leadership in Congress and that I work to defend every day.

Today, my family and I own and operate Swann Ridge Bison Farm in West Virginia. This farm is an investment for future generations, not in revenue or sales, but for the values it helps instill in everyone who bails hay or runs animals through a chute. First, my children and now my grandchildren were able to learn the same lessons and live the same experiences of countless American farmers before them – that agriculture feeds not only our mouths, but also our souls.

Farming is at the heart of our nation’s values. Our Founding Fathers knew that the only way our nation would thrive is if we worked together. However, the idea of producing something that will benefit you and your community is falling to the wayside. I believe if we get back to our founding values, there is so much more that unites us than divides us. Farming is a great example of this.

Farming has instilled the West Virginian spirit of hard work, growth, and family, which I prioritize and advocate for in Congress. In conversations, hearings, and House floor debates, I am a part of a fight for the soul of our country. I will continue to advocate for opportunities and resources in market access for our producers and support our West Virginia farmers to ensure they are protected from adversarial foreign competitors. We owe it to our children to ensure America continues to be a strong agriculture producer globally.

Under the Biden Administration, my constituents are struggling with record-high inflation due to reckless government spending, they are hitting regulatory barriers that hurt our farmers, energy producers, and all businesses, and our communities are seeing the repercussions from open borders. This Administration knows nothing of personal responsibility and insists on blaming Republicans for their destructive policies. Americans see right through this. I’ve heard countless stories from my constituents that echo my own – they saw the value of working with their hands, building something from the ground up, and taking responsibility for their actions. These lessons are learned by teaching our children hard work, perseverance, and personal responsibility.

These principles are also what make me most proud to serve the people of West Virginia in Congress. Just as Jesus taught his disciples to become “fishers of men,” I recognize the service and community that is represented well through agriculture. Following Christ’s invitation, the disciples gain newfound enlightenment when they embrace compassion as part of their trade. They learn not just to fish, but also to serve men – as a result, their subsequent catch is more plentiful than they could have dreamed.

The importance of these lessons should not be ignored or understated. As I work to defend these American values in a fight for the soul of our country, I am always reminded of the values I was raised on and the upbringing I seek for my family and families across our country.

It is the same compassion and integrity I strive to bring in my role as a grandmother that I bring to my work in Congress, and I am confident that these indispensable values will carry us through this fight.
My name is Maggie Blankenship from the Putnam County Farm Bureau, and I had the honor of representing West Virginia at the biannual Communications Bootcamp. The three-day boot camp, hosted by the Women’s Leadership Committee, was held in Washington, D.C. from April 3rd through the 6th. This year’s class had 15 women from across the nation in attendance.

This boot camp introduced me to some top-notch ladies in agriculture. Not only did I meet and network with some of the best in the industry, but I also learned from American Farm Bureau Federation’s impressive employees how to be a stronger and more compelling communicator for agriculture. I learned how to give a speech without prompts, to better speak to the media on behalf of farmers and the issues that surround our lifestyle. I am excited to return to West Virginia and bring back the knowledge I learned, and I hope to share more farmers’ stories in the months to come.

While in D.C., I met and spoke with Congresswoman Carol Miller and Senator Shelly Moore Capito’s office. Both offices were very welcoming and strong supporters of the agriculture community. They are beginning to gather information on the upcoming farm bill. I greatly appreciate their offices meeting with me and discussing the issues that even small farms, like us in West Virginia, are having with farm labor today.

The agriculture industry is the only industry that touches every person in society through food, fiber, and fuel. It’s important for farmers to stand up for their lifestyle and industry. From this experience, I am now better equipped to do so. After all, if we don’t share our stories about our farms, who will? There is no better person to share your story, and no better time than now to support and encourage the local farmer.
I encourage any woman, who is involved in agriculture, reading this article to think about applying to one of the upcoming Bootcamps. This workshop truly shifted my way of thinking and speaking about agriculture and allowed me to make a strong connection with women from all over the United States. If you have any questions or would like more information about this program, please visit https://www.fb.org/program/womens-leadership#bootcamp or reach out directly. I’ll be happy to speak about my experience. I would also be amidst without thanking the West Virginia Farm Bureau, Steve, Brenda, and Michelle Wilfong for all their help in helping and encouraging me along the way.
March 21, 2023 was celebrated as National Ag Day throughout the United States. This is a time when producers, agricultural associations, corporations, universities, government agencies and others gather to recognize and celebrate the abundance provided by American agriculture. Various other Young Farmers & Ranchers Committees celebrated this day in an assortment of ways.

The West Virginia Young Farmers and Ranchers Committee celebrated by reading to local elementary school students. Members that were able to participate read the American Farm Bureau Federation book of the year, “I Love Strawberries” by Shannon Anderson. It tells a story of Jolie, who LOVES strawberries. She is on an unstoppable and hilarious mission to grow her own food from seedling to table. Growing strawberries is a lot of work and responsibility, but Jolie is ready with the help of her faithful rabbit Munchy! Together they find out just how delicious, rewarding, and sometimes complicated it can be to grow your own food.

Americans need to understand the value of agriculture in their daily lives. By reading this story to young children, it was our goal to spur their interest in agriculture. Would you like to be involved next year? We would encourage you to reach out to your county Farm Bureau or reach out to a YF&R committee member!
Setting your garden up for success in early spring

You’ve started your seeds and they are thriving. You’ve nurtured them from tender seedlings to strong, stocky plants that are nearing their time to graduate to your outdoor garden. You may wonder, “how can I set these plants up for success in their next stage of life?”

The first step in transitioning your transplants—homegrown or purchased—is hardening off. Hardening off is the process of gradually introducing plants into a new environment, in this case, outdoors. It’s important to keep in mind that your plants have lived a cozy life up until now. Quickly transitioning transplants outdoors into a harsher environment that involves changing temperatures, wind and full sun can result in plants that have slowed growth, wilting and even death.

Hardening off will trigger root development and thicken cell walls, causing plants to become much firmer and harder. This results in a plant that can withstand harsher outdoor environment. It’s important to note that hardening off will take some time, but healthy, strong transplants are worth it to have a successful vegetable or flower garden.

Start hardening off your transplants by moving them outdoors to a shady, protected area, such as a porch. By the end of the hardening off phase, the plants can stay outside for 24 hours, depending on the temperature. If the temperature is going to dip near freezing, bring your tender transplants indoors. During the hardening-off period, decrease the amount of water and fertilizer that the transplants receive, but do not allow them to wilt.

Hardening off is just one strategy to create a bountiful vegetable garden or a beautiful flower garden. Some plants do not perform well as transplants or can perform just as well if they are directly sown into your garden. Examples of these plants include peas, cucurbits (melons, squash, cucumbers, etc.), beans, root vegetables (carrots, radishes, beets, potatoes, onions, etc.), zinnias, cosmos, nasturtium and sunflowers.

To determine when to direct sow, read the back of your seed packet for instructions. It will detail timing, depth, density and soil preparation. Pay close attention to seeding depth, as some will require darkness to germinate, for example, nasturtium. For other plants, getting seeds too deep will inhibit germination or cause the seed to rot. After the seeds germinate, you may need to thin the seedlings to prevent overcrowding or misshapen produce for root crops. Thinning information also can be found on the seed packet.

These are just a few steps to set up your garden for a successful harvest or beautiful blooms in the growing season. Taking steps to harden off transplants and reading and following the seed packet instructions can result in healthier plants, which can lead to a more bountiful harvest.

By Jennifer Friend, WVU Extension Agent – Harrison County

Start hardening off your transplants by moving them outdoors to a shady, protected area, such as a porch.
WVU Extension offers training to address rural mental health concerns

According to the Centers for Disease Control, those who work in farming, fishing and forestry had the third highest suicide rate of any occupation in 2020. Price fluctuations, severe weather, crop failure, long hours and lack of medical care stressed rural families even before the COVID-19 pandemic. Many are now experiencing extreme stress, anxiety, depression and untreated mental or physical illnesses.

Rural areas also may be lacking in facilities for mental health treatment, compounding difficulty even if someone is willing to seek assistance. There can be a stigma around mental illness and many rural families see it as a weakness to ask for help. In many areas, and particularly in West Virginia, substance use amplifies health concerns and has created an epidemic of itself.

Many local organizations realize the amount of stress farm families experience and are determined to help. WVU Extension delivers relevant, research-based educational programs to families and communities across West Virginia. They are offering programming and leading conversations about how to respond to friends and family who may be in crisis or experiencing suicidal thoughts, as well as surveying producers concerning their stress levels and offering training in stress management.

With a grant through the West Virginia Department of Agriculture Farmers and Ranchers Stress Assistance Network (FRSAN), WVU Extension agents attended dinner meetings last month to offer the QPR Institute’s suicide prevention program. This program provides attendees with training to intervene in the lives of those they love who might be having suicidal thoughts. It gives attendees the knowledge and confidence to “question” those in need, “persuade” them to not take their life, and “refer” them to services that can provide the support they need.

Suicide is preventable and the majority of those that attempt suicide are dealing with a temporary crisis. Much like CPR, those who are trained in QPR can save the life of a neighbor or friend.

Another project WVU Extension is working with is Mental Health First Aid. This curriculum is for either adults or youths and teaches community members to recognize the signs that someone is having a mental health concern and respond with the “ALGEE” action plan. It involves “assessing” the situation, “listening” non-judgmentally, “giving” reassurance, and “referring” to professional help or self-care.

Neither program requires you to be an expert, you just have to be someone who cares and is willing to help someone in need. If you would like more information about either QPR training or the Mental Health First Aid program, contact your local WVU Extension office. Trainings can be provided in your community.

If you or someone you care about is experiencing depression, anxiety or having thoughts of suicide, help is available. The suicide crisis helpline is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Call or text 988 for free, confidential support.

By Jodi Richmond, WVU Extension Agent – Mercer County

Agriculture legend turns 100!

WVU Professor Emeritus of Plant Pathology Mannon Gallegly has accomplished another incredible feat – Gallegly turned 100 on April 11.

He has spent his life developing tasty and disease-resistant tomatoes: “West Virginia 63” or “The Peoples’ Tomato,” “Mountaineer Pride” and “Mountaineer Delight.”

In 2021, he donated the seeds to the World Vegetable Center.

Gallegly received the AAAS Campbell Soup Award and certificates of recognition from the USDA Agricultural Research Service North Atlantic Region.

He was named “Most Loyal” during the 70th annual Mountaineer Week in 2017.

In 2018, he was inducted into the WVU Order of Vandalia, the highest honor of service to the University.

By Jodi Richmond, WVU Extension Agent – Mercer County
The wild turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo silvestris*) inhabits the eastern United States and can be found across West Virginia, but this was not always the case. During the early 1900s, wild turkeys were almost extirpated throughout much of the eastern United States. Luckily, small pockets of wild turkeys and their habitats persisted in West Virginia.

Through relocation and reintroduction programs in the 1950 as well as increased efforts toward the reestablishment and management of habitat, wild turkeys are now well established statewide. However, biologists are concerned that turkey populations are declining in some areas due to changes in habitat, reduced reproduction and predation.

Wild turkeys are a forest-dwelling species but are adapted to use a variety of vegetation types, from grasslands to forests to urban environments. Turkeys are omnivorous, and their diets are just as varied as the areas they inhabit. Landscapes with mature, mast-producing trees and shrubs mixed with a diversity of herbaceous openings, old fields and utility rights of way will meet wild turkeys’ cover requirements throughout the seasons. Wild turkeys nest on the ground in mature forests, young regenerating forests, brushy areas and old fields, typically in areas with abundant ground-level vegetation for concealment. They also will use these areas and herbaceous openings for foraging.

Brood-rearing habitat is important for young poult survival, since even in a good year, mortality of pouls can reach 50% to 75%. The availability of brood-rearing habitat is often the factor that limits turkey populations. Open riparian woodlands, forest openings, grasslands/pastures, crop fields, utility rights-of-way, and old fields or brushy areas are heavily used during brooding season – late spring to early summer. Not only do turkeys forage on the herbaceous vegetation, but these areas also produce abundant insects, which are a food source high in protein and necessary for the fast development of young pouls.

Wild turkeys and nests are vulnerable to nest predators, such as raccoons, skunks, foxes, opossums, bobcats and black rat snakes. Trapping is encouraged, but habitat management to increase nesting cover is the best defense against predators.

Since wild turkeys will use a variety of vegetation types, the key to habitat management is providing a good interspersion or mix of different vegetation types including mature forests, forest openings, shrublands and early successional areas (areas dominated by herbaceous vegetation). Landowners in the Mountain State should focus on promoting good nesting habitat, brooding habitat and winter food sources.

Forest management should promote oak species to provide a fall food source for wild turkeys. Wild turkeys also need openings within or near forests to provide herbaceous vegetation for foraging and cover. In many cases, the understory in our forests lacks nesting cover and herbaceous vegetation for foraging due to a completely closed canopy. In these situations, timber or forest stand improvement techniques will benefit turkey populations by improving mast production and stimulating understory growth.

Forest roads and openings, as well as nearby natural or managed herbaceous areas, provide critical foraging and brooding habitat for wild turkeys. These may be logging roads, skid trails, log landings, utility rights-of-way, old fields, pastures, orchards or any other clearing with herbaceous cover. Since 79% of West Virginia is forested, these herbaceous openings cover only a small percentage of the landscape and, because of their importance to wild turkey and other wildlife, should be managed for maximum productivity.

Early successional areas with a heavy component of brushy cover also can provide nesting cover for wild turkeys. These areas also provide foraging and bugging areas for adults and broods. These areas should be cleared of cool season grasses, such as fescue and orchard grass, allowing the native seed bank to respond. Planting trees, like persimmon, oaks and black cherry, and shrubs, such as mulberry, serviceberry, dogwoods and hawthorns, or allowing some natural woody encroachment along the edges or scattered throughout early successional areas can increase brushy cover for nesting and foraging.

Food plots can also benefit wild turkeys when forage availability is limited. Food plots are not a replacement for managing the surrounding habitat and do not replace nesting, foraging, brooding and escape cover provided by forest and early successional vegetation management.

By Sheldon Owen, WVU Extension Wildlife Specialist
Early season vegetable insect pests

Insect pests regularly attack vegetable crops, and growers should be familiar with their biology. Some insects spend the winter in the vegetable debris, leaf litter or in the ground. Other insects do not live through the winter because they can’t survive the low temperatures. Instead, they migrate from the southern states every year. Depending on the insect species, insects are active during different times of the growing season. Growers should pay special attention to early season pests because they can attack seedlings and transplants when crops are more susceptible.

Aphids
Aphids are one of the most common pests during the whole growing season in vegetables. They are soft-bodied insects that use their piercing-sucking mouthparts to feed on plant sap. Growers should check for aphids before transplanting seedlings, and infested plants should be discarded. Infestations also can result from small numbers of winged aphids that fly to the plant and find it to be a suitable host. They deposit several wingless young on the most tender tissue before moving on to find a new plant. Colonies or clusters of aphids in the bud area and on undersides of new leaves are an indication that they’re established in the plant.

Black cutworms
Black cutworm is an early-season pest that migrates from the south. They cut down young plants as they feed on stems. There are other cutworm species, such as dingy, grassy and bronzed cutworms, but they are active in late summer and fall. Common vegetables they like to feed on include asparagus, beans, cabbage and other crucifers, carrots, celery, corn, lettuce, peas, peppers, potatoes and tomatoes.

Cabbage maggots
Cabbage maggot adults emerge in spring from their overwintering sites in the soil and can travel up to a mile in search of host plants. They attack brassica crops, which are grown in cool spring conditions and need an early start to reach maturity at the desired time. Adults lays eggs in wet areas of the field. After larvae emerge from the eggs, they feed on roots and can destroy the root system.

The first sign of a problem is wilting of the plant on sunny days and yellowing or purpling of outer leaves. Later, plants collapse, wilt down and die. Similar to cabbage maggots, seed corn and onion maggots are early-season pests that attack crops of their appropriate crop family.

Wireworms
Wireworms are early-season pests that are difficult to see because they live in the soil. Wireworms do more damage during cool, wet spring seasons. They damage crops by devouring seeds in the soil, cutting underground stems and roots, and by boring into the larger stems and roots. Potatoes, carrots, peas, onions, corn, sweet potatoes, lettuce, melons, beans, cowpeas and sugar beets are susceptible to wireworms. White grubs also are early-season pests that live in the soil and feed on vegetable crops.

Once growers have a plan for the season, they should become familiar with the most common insects that attack their crops.

By Carlos Quesada, WVU Extension Entomology Specialist
Who’s the No. 1 protein source in chicken feed? YOU are. That’s right. You’re winning.

All soybean farmers, including you, are really big in poultry and livestock feed. How? By pooling your resources through your soy checkoff. Learn how your soy checkoff is bringing tangible returns back to you and your operation at unitedsoybean.org/hopper.

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The History of West Virginia’s Northern Panhandle

by Drew Manko, YF&R Committee Member

Being from what I consider the forgotten part of West Virginia, I thought that it would be a good use of my article to remind my WVFB friends about the northernmost part of our state, and its importance in West Virginian, and American history. Most West Virginians that you ask, in my neck of the woods, will tell you that the Northern Panhandle consists of 4 counties: Hancock, Brooke, Ohio, and Marshall. Some will even include Wetzel and Tyler, but seeing as they’re below the corner of Pennsylvania, I think that’s a stretch. Since statehood, those 4 counties have formed the core of West Virginia’s 1st Congressional District.

In the late 19th century, the Northern Panhandle developed as an industrial area, especially in the manufacturing of steel and glass products. It still largely retains its industrial character, although many of its factories have closed down or fallen on hard times like others in the Rust Belt. The region also contains the Panhandle Coalfield.

But how did West Virginia end up with a little sliver of land between Pennsylvania and Ohio? It all started in 1776, when the new state of Virginia claimed what was then called, Yohogania County. The county ceased to exist after the border dispute between the two states was resolved in the 1780s. Thus, it is sometimes referred to as a “lost county,” although 1.5 million people live within the territory it once claimed, which encompasses two entire counties and parts of four others in two states.

After the border disputes, the country along the Ohio River was awarded to Virginia to increase it’s frontage on the river, which at that time, was the country’s most important inland waterway. In 1861, as our nation divided itself in civil war, West Virginia broke off from the state of Virginia, becoming the only modern state to declare independence from the Confederacy. This essentially freed Unionists in the northwestern counties of Virginia to form a government of their own as a result of the Wheeling Convention.
West Virginia Farm Bureau News

Due to the new state’s proximity to the Confederacy capital in Richmond, it was decided that the capital of the new state of West Virginia would be in Wheeling, Ohio County. The First Capitol Building still stands in Wheeling and is a National Historic Landmark. The Sisters of St. Joseph, who operated Wheeling Hospital, were nurses during the war. They treated soldiers brought to the hospital and prisoners at the Athenaeum in downtown Wheeling. In 1864, the Union army took control of the hospital, and the sisters went on the federal payroll as matrons and nurses, beginning that summer. Several of them later received pensions in recognition of their service.

During the early 20th century, Wheeling and the surrounding panhandle became an industrial powerhouse. With its close proximity to Pittsburgh, it shared in the industrial boom of the steel and glass industries, as well as river shipping, and was a major hub on the B&O railroad. The Panhandle today is still a diverse place of industry which includes steelmaking, agriculture, manufacturing, entertainment, and even technology. This has only been a short history of West Virginia’s Northern Panhandle, but I encourage all of our WVFB members to read more about West Virginia’s northernmost residents.

West Virginia’s “Independence Hall” in Wheeling, WV. Here West Virginia declared its separation from Virginia during the Civil War to become its own state. Photo courtesy of howderfamily.com.

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I wrote once about moments of peace, and I think I even quoted one of my favorite movies. In the 1990’s film, “While You Were Sleeping,” the father says to his son over a breakfast of donuts that, “Life is a pain in the rear…you work hard, try to provide for your family, and then, for one minute, everything’s good. Everyone’s well. Everyone’s happy. In that one minute, you have peace.”

There is a whole lot of truth in that little monologue, enough that I think it is important to revisit in my writings to you.

My husband and I were checking the cows the other day. The sun was shining warm and bright after a few chilly days. Baby calves were faring well. No late-night chase was going to be needed. The dog was riding on the four-wheeler behind us. I caught a glimpse of our shadows thrown on the field as we rode along. And in that moment, I had peace. Everything was good. I squeezed my eyes shut and I forgot about all the craziness happening in our country. I forgot about family worries and work worries and whether this thing called farming will make it through the Green New Deal (because, truly, life can be a pain in the rear sometimes.)

And in that one minute, I had perfect peace. I thanked God for that peace and thanked Him for this life. I read something the other day that struck a deep chord. Life on this earth is the only Hell that we as believers will ever know. And even still, this life can be exceptionally beautiful and blessed.

Even when life and world circumstances seem dismal, we can be assured that this is only temporary. Finding peace amidst the challenges of life is a gift only from God and I believe is just a little foretaste of Heaven. My challenge to each of us is to find peace every day. Instead of being surprised by that sudden, overwhelming feeling of peace; start seeking it out.

Maybe you know what brings you peace. Maybe it is a slow cup of coffee on the front porch swing. Maybe it is an evening cow check through the pasture. Maybe it is kneading bread, or watching the baby kittens. Maybe it is the rhythmic movements of splitting wood, or watching new ground be tilled up in the spring. Whatever it is, find peace every day. Relish it. Make it a priority for one minute every day. No matter what else is going on around you. Stop and just enjoy the peace. You might find that your one-minute practice starts to bleed over into the rest of your day; making even the pain in the rear days a little better.
FFA and 4-H members, along with producers, suppliers, consumers, and others involved in the beef industry, all descended upon the 33rd Annual West Virginia Beef Expo at WVU Jackson’s Mill 4-H Camp on April 7th and 8th, 2023.

More than 150 head of Simmental, Angus, Charolais, Red Angus, Limousin, and Polled Hereford cattle were on display and offered for sale. In addition, several businesses were on hand to display their products and discuss their benefits and uses on beef cattle farms.

The highlights for the youngsters included the Stockman’s Judging Contest (a competition that tests overall knowledge about the beef industry), the Youth Grilling Contest, and the Grassland Evaluation Contest.

The Friday night banquet featured speaker Kevin Unger. Kevin’s expertise focused on the selection, development, and breeding of superior beef cattle genetics.

Sarah Sions of Mineral County was crowned the new West Virginia Beef Queen. During the coming year, she will represent West Virginia and the Beef Industry Council by promoting beef at various events. Some of those events will include the State Fair of West Virginia, and the West Virginia Livestock Roundup. Sarah is currently a sophomore at Potomac State College.

The Expo is a cooperative effort of the West Virginia breed organizations, West Virginia Cattlemen’s Association, West Virginia Cattle Women, West Virginia Department of Agriculture, the WVU Extension Service and WVU Davis College of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Design.
First Place: Mineral County FFA
Second Place: Lewis County 4-H Senior
Third Place: Spring Mills FFA
WHEN YOU’RE READY TO DIG IN AND WORK THE SOIL, TURN TO WOODS®.
Woods’ rotary tillers couple the best design features with outstanding performance so they are easy to use, durable, and highly productive. Each model featuring a 3-year gearbox warranty, our tillers will handle your landscaping and gardening projects with ease year after year.

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By Mike Snyder

Allium what? - *Ramps* in plain West Virginia lingo—the title of this article is the Latin botanical name for that stinky little member of the lily family that so many of us relish each spring.

I had heard of ramps growing up as a kid, but never saw one until a 1950s fishing trip with some classmates on the Laurel Fork River in the mountains of Randolph County. I caught my first trout on that Camp Twelve outing. The last weekend in April trout season opened in those days, and the air and water were very chilling to us town boys.

I took off down the Laurel until I saw no more footprints and with diligence and determination, I caught my limit using a Mepps spinner. These were the first trout I’d ever caught. I hiked back upstream to our pup tents to check in with my buddies who all reported the rewarding joy of catching stocked rainbows except for one pal on the football team.

Near camp, at the mouth of a little run that flowed into the Laurel, I saw a little green tuber with a white stem with its roots cut off, and left there. I knew it had to be a ramp, freshly dropped by the guy who cleaned it. I ate it right there. It was very spicy and kinda hot with a unique taste, remembered to this day.

Sixteen years later, my wife and I were living on the Laurel Fork, roughly twelve miles or so downstream from my Camp Twelve fishing expedition. That earlier trout outing in the mountains, and the waters of the Laurel, instilled an abiding love and resolve to live nowhere else but along a trout stream within the boundaries of the Monongahela National Forest. It had become a beacon that brought me home after many travels across the U.S. and Europe.

Our first winter on that Laurel Fork sheep farm was a real learning curve, but, thanks to the heat of our trusty Warm Morning coal stove, we prevailed through the cold, snowy winter in our uninsulated farmhouse. We set off the following April resolved to dig ramps. There was a farm on down Middle Mountain where there was an entire slope covered with one of the largest ramp patches I have yet to see, save one way up Glady Fork.

We dug a gunny sack full which we cleaned and Chef Jill prepared in a large black iron skillet. Cooked in their own juices and bacon grease with slab bacon,
pinto beans, fried potatoes, and cornbread, we ate that dinner with gusto. Fifty years later we still enjoy these same traditional meals. Nowadays, we have to use thick sliced bacon because the old-time slab bacon we cut with an Old Hickory butcher knife is largely a thing of the past. Looking back, I vividly recall April Sunday services on Middle Mountain, opening the church door, and being overwhelmed by the pungency of the vapors of the three dozen or so ramp eaters, primed by our overly warm furnace temperatures. Odoriferous would be an understatement.

Eating ramps causes a very strong smell in the eater’s system, which can be smelled by others, but isn’t noticeable to the imbiber. Lots of stories concern students and classroom teachers who either put ramp eating pupils out of class or moved them to seats farthest away from the teacher’s desk. At the school where I taught, I remember encouraging my students to eat all the ramps they wanted because it was part of our heritage. I’m sure my own ramp body odor wrinkled noses there as well. One out-of-state teacher kept correcting some of my kids about their common English vernacular. The boys and I knew their ramp-eating odor amounted to a quiet resistance to her superior attitude.

Digging ramps is a major part of what ramps are all about. Jill enjoys this spring ritual even more than I do, and she always digs more than me. I made her a ramp hoe out of a buggy spring in my blacksmith shop. Mine is from a pick forged flat like a slim, lightweight mini-mattock. So equipped, along with a couple of pokes, it’s up the Allegheny on our friend’s land and “grub ‘em up!” We generally dig them in early April before the green tops get to four inches long, the shorter the tastier. Inside the stem of a ramp are three main filaments—hence, the tri in tricoccum.

If you know the location of a ramp patch you can dig up their delicious whitish-purple bulbs under the woods duff before the leaves emerge. Prior to emerging, ramps have slender brown stems, some 12 inches or longer, topped by a round “starburst” cluster of dried filaments left from the summer blossom. This shows you where to dig.

The plants grow throughout the middle Appalachians. Altitude and latitude are factors, and tree-covered slopes with leaf humus are always present. We like to think of them as uniquely West Virginian, but they are also found in Pennsylvania, Virginia, North Carolina and Tennessee, and several other states. They are greatly favored by the Cherokee Indians in the Smoky Mountains. Ramps were the first greens of the year for many rural families in past years, appreciated for their savory nourishment and as a spring tonic. My great Aunt Etty once told me how the outhouses in her Jordan, Marion County coal camp reeked in springtime from ramp eating, noted for “really cleaning you out!”

Ramps are in the same family as onions, garlic, leeks, and shallots, all of which have bulbs.

The ramp is high in nutrients, antioxidants, and vitamins C, A, and K. Its name is derived from the English rampson or rampion, names for wild leeks. This terminology is preserved in Richwood’s annual Feast of the Rampion which took place this year on the next to last weekend in April. Richwood was the home of the late Jim Comstock, editor, and publisher of the News Leader and West Virginia Hillbilly—his “weakly” newspaper. The always humorous Hillbilly had a circulation of 20,000 in its heyday and was enjoyed for its West Virginia folklore by readers, from government bigwigs and executives, to everyday town and country folks alike. Comstock once printed the News Leader with ink liberally diffused with ramp juice. The
heavily scented paper caused a famously celebrated reprimand from the U.S. Postmaster General.

There were 25 ramp fairs and festivals listed online this spring. Most were in April, with several in March. Huntington’s is aptly titled the “Stink Fest.” Others are held throughout our state from north to south. There are others in Virginia, North Carolina, and Tennessee. Just north of us in Greene County, PA, there’s one held in the Mason-Dixon Park. There are innumerable ramp feeds in churches and fire halls all over this state—likely near most West Virginia Farm Bureau News readers. Elkins also hosts an upscale Ramps and Rails Festival, along with a railroad tour the last weekend in April. I have long felt that if some savvy entrepreneur came up with the right graphics on a tag plate for the front of vehicles proclaiming EAT MORE RAMP, it would sell like gangbusters.

This writer will close with a well-remembered question to me from the late Richard White, a lifelong Middle Mountain man. It was best heard in his slow, laconic drawl, “Miaak...did ye git ye a-mess’a ramps yet?”

This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.
– Psalm 118:24
Recipe Possibilities

MAY IS BEEF MONTH!

BEEF. IT’S WHAT’S FOR DINNER.®

Recipe Courtesy of BeefIts WhatsForDinner.com and the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association

GRILLED COWBOY STEAKS

The perfect way to get a jump start on summer. You’ll love this Beef Ribeye Steaks recipe with a rub that tastes like you’re eating on the open range. Try this recipe with other steaks on the grill as well.

INGREDIENTS:

2 beef Ribeye Steaks (about 1 pound)

RUB:

The secret is in the rub! Rubs can be applied just before cooking or up to 2 hours in advance and refrigerated until cooking time.

2 teaspoons sweet paprika
1-1/2 teaspoons dried thyme leaves
1 teaspoon garlic powder
1 teaspoon onion powder
1/2 teaspoon salt (optional)
1/2 teaspoon pepper

COOKING:

Combine Rub ingredients; press evenly onto beef Ribeye Steaks.

Cook’s Tip: Beef Top Sirloin, Top Loin (Strip) or Tenderloin Steaks, cut 1 inch thick; or 2 pounds beef Porterhouse or T-bone steaks, cut 1 inch thick may be used.

Place steak(s) on grid over medium, ash-covered coals or over medium heat on preheated gas grill. Grill according to the chart for medium rare (145°F) to medium (160°F) doneness, turning occasionally.

MAY IS BEEF MONTH!
Theme: U.S. States

ACROSS
1. Attired
5. *Alabama, for short
8. Type of pit, at a concert
12. *Nevada's "biggest little city in the world"
13. October birthstone
14. Don't do this to words?
15. Elusive Himalayan
16. Poet Sandburg
17. Come to pass
18. *Home of the Bourbon Trail
20. Not us
21. Winds to a ship captain
22. *Dish popular in the 50th state
23. "Largest state, by area"
25. Dick ____ of "Bewitched"
30. Tombstone acronym
31. Spews
34. Succulent medicinal plant
35. Cast member
37. Greek "t"
38. Gibson garnish
39. Evade payment
40. Like certain pentameter
42. Lenon's wife
43. Fashionable
45. Barely audible words
46. Casino's pull
48. Bear down under
50. Sound bounce-back
52. *a.k.a. Commonwealth
53. Sing like Sinatra
54. Not working
55. Not in port
56. Joaquin Phoenix 2013 movie
57. Chop off
58. Bit of work

DOWN
1. Have a bawl
2. Potato's soup partner
3. Initial stake
4. Happenings
5. Lickety-split
6. Shenanigans
7. Friend in war
8. *State with longest freshwater shoreline
9. It's enough?
10. Pond gunk
11. Joaquin Phoenix 2013 movie
12. Relating to eye
13. *Michigan's "____ City"*
14. Selfish one
15. Pavlov's step
16. Middle East natives
17. In a fitting way
18. Half a ticket
19. Sober Ness
20. Not a soul (2 words)
21. Operatic voice
22. Like certain pentameter
23. Towner of "Modern Family"
24. *State with panhandle
25. Round openings
26. School of thought suffix
27. Google search category
28. Often-missed humor
29. Hide craftsman
30. Little one
31. Lowest deck on a ship
32. Timeline divisions
33. His was a merry old soul
34. Tiny bottle
35. "Field of Dreams" movie setting
36. Port in Yemen
37. Tax pro
38. Round openings
39. Operatic voice
40. School of thought suffix
41. Google search category
42. Often-missed humor
43. Hide craftsman
44. Little one
45. Lowest deck on a ship
46. Timeline divisions
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48. Tiny bottle
49. "Field of Dreams" movie setting
50. Tax pro
51. Tax pro
52. Tax pro
53. Tax pro
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55. Tax pro
56. Tax pro
57. Tax pro
58. Tax pro
59. Tax pro
60. Tax pro
61. Tax pro
62. Tax pro
63. Tax pro
64. Tax pro

Question: Arlington National Cemetery used to be a plantation belonging to whom?
Answer: Robert E. Lee

Days after resigning from the U.S. Army on April 20, 1861, to take command of Virginian forces in the Civil War, Robert E. Lee left the Arlington estate where he had married Mary Lee and lived for 30 years. He would never return.

The government seized his property in 1864 for unpaid taxes. With Washington, D.C., teeming with dead soldiers and out of burial space, Quartermaster General Montgomery C. Meigs formally proposed Arlington as the location of a new military cemetery. On every Memorial Day weekend since 1948, troops in the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment—the Army's official ceremonial unit known as the "Old Guard"—have placed small American flags in front of all of Arlington's U.S. tombstones. Each flag is planted precisely one foot in front of a grave marker and perfectly centered.
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