



MARKETING MATTERS

**Kentucky
Department
of Agriculture**

**A Consumer
Protection And
Service Agency**

**Office of Agriculture Marketing and Product Promotion
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Frankfort, KY 40601 Phone 502-564-4983
www.kyagr.com**

Volume No. 9 Issue No. 2

Released May 22, 2008

Published Quarterly

By Bill Holleran
Marketing Matters Editor

K.C. Hardin, along with his wife, Pauline, and daughter, Jennifer, have kept a family business thriving in South Shore, Kentucky in Greenup County.

This year will mark the Hardin family's 90th year in the greenhouse business, which was started in 1918 by K.C.'s grandfather, W.F. Hardin. His grandfather used gas and radiant heat to keep the greenhouses warm through the winter months since natural gas was cheap back then. W.F. Hardin introduced Kentucky 31 fescue to the region during the 1940s. He raised and produced fescue seed that was cleaned and sold out of the old seed house that's still on the property. K.C.'s father took over the greenhouse business in the '50s, and at his father's passing in 1976, the torch was passed to K.C., who continues to live out the legacy of his forefathers.

K.C. has been involved with the family farm since he was a boy. "Back then we were famous in this area for our 'Hardin Honey Rock' melons," he said. "Granddad owned hundreds of acres and raised hay and had a large truck garden. He had 7-8 tenant houses on the property and had as many as 40 people that worked for him.

"He had a lot of foresight and always wanted to know about tomorrow and was always looking toward the future. My dad was the same way. We had a lot of field days here when I was a kid and we had cookouts and served people good country meals. Everyone sat on straw bales, and even the bankers from town would come out in their suits to enjoy the field days."



K.C. Hardin is well known in South Shore, Ky., for his geraniums.

Today the Hardins' hospitality keeps their business thriving. The greenhouses are very clean and organized and reflect the Hardins' commitment to quality. They offer bedding and vegetable plants seasonally and target Derby and Mother's Day holidays to kick off their season.

K.C. believes in treating customers right. "We're working for our customers, and we want them to be successful with the plants they buy from us," he said. "You can have a customer 20 years and lose them in 20 seconds. Repeat business is a high priority for us and an honor. We believe you should be able to back up what you tell your customers, and your word and handshake is your bond."

Hardin feels that his customers are his boss and it's his job to listen to them and serve their needs. "Our repeat business is great because there is a customer reunion here each spring that we all look forward to," he said. "We also believe that whether you buy anything or not you should receive the same treatment and positive experience."

Hardin sees a trend in customers buying locally this season with the high cost of gasoline. So this year most of their advertising will target local customers. Hardin said people are also enjoying their gardens more and want a good foundation of plants to build on. "We are fortunate here to have staff like John Miller and Dianne Lybrook, who have worked for us for 20 years. They really know plants and how our business works. They are a great resource to answer our customers' technical questions. A business is just as successful as the people working for you. Everyone here works as a team," Hardin said.

Although farmers are facing many challenges these days with increasing fuel, labor, and fertilizer costs, Hardin is optimistic that young farmers will have a future in agriculture. His advice is to have discipline and keep everything in order and to get your head on straight by developing good habits. "You must be able to run a tight budget and keep detailed records so nothing is left to guesswork," he said. "People just getting started in agriculture need to do their homework, test the water and start out small. Crawl before you walk, and walk before you run, then build on your success. Be positive and don't get discouraged. There's often light at the end of the tunnel."

Hardin also makes sure to break cycles in his greenhouse by thoroughly cleaning them out at the end of the season so there is no chance problems could develop from plants that are carried over. He is very meticulous about having a clean environment and healthy plants.

For more information about K.C. Greenhouse and Garden Center call (606) 932-4238.

Competitions, Festivals Showcase Top Kentucky Wines

Staff Report



KENTUCKY WINE

Kentucky wines will be put to the test by experts and casual enthusiasts alike in four upcoming competitions and four festivals.

Events are set for Nicholasville, Bardstown, Highland Heights and Danville. Each site will host a competition

of Kentucky wines with a festival to follow about a month later. The Kentucky State Fair will hold its first commercial wine competition in August.

“Kentucky’s wine industry is growing in quantity and quality,” Agriculture Commissioner Richie Farmer said. “A generation ago, Kentucky had no wineries; now we have 47. Some of our wineries are good enough to compete with the biggest and best winemakers in the world. These competitions will give our winemakers a chance to measure themselves against their peers, and the festivals will provide visitors the opportunity to

taste some great Kentucky Proud wines.”

The schedule of events includes:

- Bardstown – Kentucky Wine Fest Competition, April 19, and Bardstown Rotary’s Wine & Cheese Tasting, May 31
- Highland Heights – Northern Kentucky Commercial Wine Competition, May 10, and Northern Kentucky Wine Fest, June 7
- Danville – Central Kentucky WineFest Competition, May 17, and Central Kentucky WineFest, June 13
- Louisville – Kentucky State Fair Commercial Wine Competition, Aug. 10.

Seven Kentucky wines brought 20 medals home in February from the Florida State Fair International Wine and Grape Juice Competition, which attracted more than 1,600 entries from 36 states and 10 foreign countries.

“The growth of our wine industry is generating economic activity in our rural communities,” Commissioner Farmer said. “It’s also creating demand for grapes, which helps Kentucky farmers. The Kentucky Department

of Agriculture, the University of Kentucky and the Kentucky Grape and Wine Council are working together to expand the industry and make the Commonwealth a producer of great wine.”

For more information on Kentucky’s growing grape and wine industry visit www.Kentuckywine.com or contact KDA’s grape and wine marketing specialist, Stacia Alford, at stacia.alford@ky.gov or (502) 564-4983.

Will Sheep and Goat Market Prices Stay High?

By Tess Caudill

With all the troubles these days in the livestock industry, it’s hard to get very excited about raising and selling livestock. For most industries the dropping market prices coupled with the ever-rising cost of feed just hasn’t left much room for profit. There is one bright spot in the industry, however, but you have to look down to find it—down to sheep and goat level.

Market goats in the 45- to 60-pound range have been bringing around \$1.50 per pound, and market lambs over 100 pounds are still fetching upwards of \$1.20 per pound around the country. Fortunately for sheep and goat producers, these kinds of prices can help compensate for some of the higher inputs all livestock producers are facing. The question is: How long will it last?

Typically sheep and goat prices are always higher in the winter and spring. The unfortunate news is they almost always drop in the summer. Sometimes this drop can be quick and very significant with past markets dropping as much as 30 to 40 cents in a week’s time. But this year has been a little different. With the drought in the Southeast and the rains in Texas, the market pattern has been a little off all year. It seemed to take forever for prices to rebound this winter. Plus, a tremendous number of ewes and does were culled this fall as producers faced the winter with little or no hay supply. Hopefully, somehow this will all add up to sheep and goat prices staying stronger longer into the summer, and our sheep and goat industries will continue to be profitable ones for farmers.

Kentucky National Dairy Show Highlights

By Katherine Wheatley

Exhibitors sold 229 lots for \$671,950 at the 2008 Kentucky National Dairy Shows and Sales April 3-4 at the Kentucky Exposition Center in Louisville.

The top-selling female, consigned by Wayne Sliker of St. Paris, Ohio, sold in the Brown Swiss sale for \$13,100. Chris Durbin of Leitchfield, Ky., purchased the sale-topper. The Ayrshire, Guernsey, Holstein and Jersey breeds also were represented.

In conjunction with the Kentucky National Dairy Show and Sale, the fourth annual Kentucky Kow-A-Rama featured 228 entries representing the Ayrshire, Brown Swiss, Guernsey, Holstein, Jersey, Red and White, and Milking Shorthorn breeds. Ben and Kirby Sparrow of Owenton, Ky., exhibiting in the Brown Swiss show, took home Supreme Junior Champion of the Youth Show and the Open Show. Supreme Grand Champion of the Youth Show came out of the Jersey show and was exhibited by Ben Sauder of Tremont, Ill. Supreme Grand Champion of the Open Show also came out of the Jersey show and was exhibited by Dick Miller of Osgood, Ind.



Congratulations to all consignors, purchasers and exhibitors at the 2008 Kentucky National Dairy Show and Sale and the Kentucky Kow-A-Rama Spring Show. For more information, contact Katherine Wheatley at the Kentucky Department of Agriculture at (502) 564-4983.

A Perspective On Organic Agriculture Production

Michael Fitzgerald
KDA Certified Organic
Program Coordinator

For some the jury may still be out on the effects of chemical fertilizer on our plants, growth stimulants, and antibiotics use in meat production or pesticides that are applied to our crops. Others have seen proof enough to grow and eat organic foods.

Organic food is produced using biological methods of fertilization and insect control instead of chemically formulated fertilizer and pesticides. It's a whole different system of farming, much as our forefathers farmed years ago.

Organic farmers have proven that they can be successful using organic production methods. Organic materials including animal manure, compost, grass clippings, cover crops, and other practices improve the soil structure and nourish the soil biology, which nourishes the plants and in turn nourishes us.

Organic farmers seek to do more than just

grow plants and animals. They work to improve the soil structure and its moisture-holding capacity, thus improving the soil food web, which increases plant health.

In organic farming insects and other pests are managed through preventative methods such as crop rotation and planting pest-deterrent species of plants. Genetically modified or bioengineered strains of plants are prohibited in organic production.

Organic farming is more time consuming, but organically produced products bring a premium price back to the farmer. The portion of American farms that produced organic crops and livestock once was miniscule, but there has been a huge increase in sales in just the last few years. Why? The consumer is asking for it. Kentucky has been no exception to this growth trend. Organic farming is the fastest-growing agricultural segment in the nation. The number of Kentucky producer applications is up nearly 300 percent in just one year. Present demand for organic food exceeds the supply, and this demand contin-

ues to grow.

If you're interested in becoming one of the growing list of farmers who want to help meet this demand, call Michael Fitzgerald at (502) 564-0290 ext. 230 and find out how to get started. Your land must be free of any prohibited substances such as chemical fertilizer and pesticides for a period of at least three years. Why not start transitioning some or all of your farm today? The application to have your farm certified with the Kentucky Department of Agriculture as "Certified Organic" includes a fee of \$125, and this includes the general farm or livestock inspection that is required by USDA, which establishes organic rules and regulations. For more information on Kentucky's Organic program and links to USDA, which regulates the national program, visit our organic program Web site at <http://www.kyagr.com/marketing/plantmktg/organic/index.htm>

COOK OFF WILL DETERMINE KENTUCKY'S SEAFOOD CHAMP

Staff Report

Kentucky chefs will test their skills at preparing Kentucky Proud seafood at the third annual Great Kentucky Seafood Cook Off June 9 at Jefferson Community and Technical College in Louisville.

The winner will represent Kentucky at the Great American Seafood Cook Off in New Orleans this summer.

"Kentucky is known for its great food, including delicious seafood dishes," Agriculture Commissioner Richie Farmer said. "The Great Kentucky Seafood Cook Off has become a much-anticipated event for showcasing the best of Kentucky's seafood cuisine. It also produces dishes that most people can cook for their families."

Competitors will prepare seafood dishes within one hour. Entries should be consumer-friendly and easy for the at-home chef to prepare. Dishes will be judged on taste, execution of skills and presentation, and ease of preparation utilizing Kentucky-grown aquaculture products. The Kentucky Department of Agriculture and the Kentucky Aquaculture Association will supply the chef's chosen

featured Kentucky Proud seafood to each competitor.

To enter, competitors must fax completed entry documents to the Kentucky Department of Agriculture at (502) 564-0303 by May 23. A \$100 entry fee must be written to the Kentucky Aquaculture Association and submitted by May 30. Competitors must submit three recipes and digital photos of the dish, the chef and the chef's restaurant. The photos will be featured in the 2008 Kentucky Aquaculture Cook Booklet. They must be e-mailed to Angela Caporelli, the Kentucky Department of Agriculture's aquaculture marketing specialist, at angela.caporelli@ky.gov.

Recipes for the cook off will be published for distribution at the Kentucky State Fair and posted on the Kentucky Department of Agriculture's Web site, www.kyagr.com.

For complete instructions, go to www.kyagr.com/seafood.htm. This year's sponsors include the Kentucky Aquaculture Association, Kentucky State University, and Jefferson Community and Technical College.

Save the Date

The first-ever Kentucky Direct Marketing Conference hosted by the Kentucky Department of Agriculture will be held November 13-14.

Seminars will be facilitated by the KDA and will focus on helping producers find ways to increase market share, improve product quality, and grow their customer base. Tentative topics include farmers' markets, Internet marketing, the Good Agricultural Practices program, and community supported agriculture or CSAs. The keynote speakers will hold nationally recognized credentials. Save the date—more information will follow in the August issue of Marketing Matters and on <http://www.kyagr.com/marketing/plantmktg/index.htm>.

Commercial Hog Producers Thinking Green

By Warren Beeler

Director of Value-Added Animal Production

A research project on a family hog farm in Daviess County may change the way manure is utilized – and address a longstanding perception problem with large production units.

Father-and-son producers Jerry and J.W. O'Bryan are building a 4,000-head feeding unit that will attempt to compost the manure. The four-room unit includes a deep pit style building unit with the bottom of the pit sitting on top of the ground. A layer of sawdust or some other carbon source will be applied to the floor of the pit, which can be heated from a hot water system in the floor. Compost will be stirred with a special machine as needed.

For compost to be "Organic," producers using a windrow system must maintain the composting materials at a temperature between 131 F and 170 F for 15 days, during which time, the materials must be turned a minimum of five times. Producers using an in-vessel or static aerated pile system must maintain the composting materials at a temperature between 131 F and 170 F for 3 days. The compost will be removed and placed in a compost building away from the hog unit

to be finished. This process will take liquid manure that is 75-80 percent water and turn it into dry, high-nutrient fertilizer that is easy to transport. Because of its added value, organic fertilizer may be better sold in 50-pound units for use in flower beds and greenhouses rather than in bulk for use on cropland.

Swine production units have vastly increased in size over the past 20 years due in large part to economics of production and advantages in marketing. The O'Bryan operation is the largest swine producer based in Kentucky with approximately 4,500 sows. As units have gotten larger the disposal of manure has become a major problem and a real perception issue for the industry. Rising fertilizer prices have enhanced the value of animal waste as a fertilizer, but a limited amount of land is available for fertilization, and transporting liquid manure longer distances to reach more land creates added expense. Composting manure into dry fertilizer addresses the transportation problem.

Dr. Richard Coffey and Dr. Doug Overhults with the University of Kentucky are conducting the research, and the Kentucky Agricultural Development Board is funding the study. The research-



The O'Bryans' new composting machine mixes hog manure with wood chips to create an environmentally-friendly fertilizer.

ers hope the process will limit odor, capture all nutrients produced and continue to improve the pigs' comfort and health. The dry, easily transportable fertilizer potentially opens new markets for the composted product.

This large-scale composting research trial, if successful, would allow the large confinement producer to utilize all manure produced and become a greener, more environmentally friendly neighbor. The success of this project could well change the way swine buildings are constructed and perceived.

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