



MARKETING MATTERS

**Kentucky
Department
of Agriculture**

**A Consumer
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Rabbit Producer Opening Processing Facility

By Bill Holleran

Lyndell L. Shepherd, his wife Alisa and children Haisley, Miranda, and Lyndell Jr., are turning a family hobby into a commercial business. One look inside his rabbit production facility called O'Hare's just outside of Waddy in Shelby County would impress anyone involved in production agriculture.

Shepherd grew up raising rabbits in Bullitt County and is a third-generation rabbit man. He's also a businessman who has built and run several companies in the Louisville area.

His rabbit production facility houses 270 does that are served by 40 bucks. The production facility is a converted hay barn with suspended pens, concrete floors, and an evaporative cooling system.

His computer production records are second to none. He records breeding information, when does kindle, litter size, birth weights, growth rates, mothering ability, and buck breeding and performance, all on a daily basis. These records allow him to make educated breeding and selection decisions.

"We breed our New Zealand White does every 42 days and hope to get nine to 10 litters of eight rabbits per litter per year," Shepherd said. "This allows us to analyze our genetics quickly. With this level of production, does are kept in the herd for two years. Rabbits have a 30-day gestation, and with properly timed breeding our does are always lactating. They never really go dry like cattle."

Shepherd never breeds does before they are 6 months old, and he always takes the does to the bucks for breeding. Does are bred back two weeks after they kindle, and eight generations of records are kept on each animal that is kept in the herd. Manure is removed daily, and the temperature is maintained below 82 degrees.



Lyndell Shepherd holding one of his New Zealand White does in his production barn.

"We expect the rabbits to weigh one pound at birth, and they should be ready for market at 56 days old weighing five pounds," Shepherd said. "The processor pays us \$1.10 per pound, and our rabbits must weigh between 4.75-5.75 pounds upon arrival to the processor. We should be able to sell 500 rabbits per week with our current production system."

Shepherd is now planning to vertically integrate his business by adding a processing facility on site. He then will be able to market his product directly to

consumers or grocers. His main goal, however, is to continue improving his genetics so he can sell breeding stock nationwide to other commercial rabbit producers.

Shepherd said raising rabbits is expensive. Good record keeping and management is a must. "Producers that sell to labs often make the most money, and some have a niche market to pet stores," said Shepherd. Shepherd hopes more consumers and restaurants will add rabbit to their list of meat choices. Shepherd said the commercial rabbit industry in England is 20 times that of the United States.

According to Shepherd, the United States Department of Agriculture does not require mandatory meat inspections for commercial rabbitries as it does for commercial poultry and beef processors. Rabbitries do, however, fall under local health department regulations. "If we find a grocery store wants us to bring a USDA inspector in to inspect our facilities, we will," Shepherd said.

Shepherd hopes to have his processing facility up and running by year's end. He then will be available to serve restaurants and grocers looking for a local source of rabbit.

O'Hare's is Kentucky-owned and operated, and it is committed to bringing consumers a high-quality product. For more information contact Shepherd at (502) 561-1854.

Patrick Colley Wins 2007 Great Kentucky Seafood Cook-off

By Angela Caporelli

Winning recipe...Bourbon Kentucky Prawns Over Sweet Corn, Tabasco and Kenny's White Cheddar Grits with Kentucky Sorghum Barbeque Sauce and topped with Baby Spinach, Sweet Onions and a Country Ham Hushpuppy.



Patrick Colley with his trophy.

In the Derby City, it was only fitting that the Great Kentucky Seafood Cook Off was decided by a nose.

Patrick Colley, executive chef at the Louisville Country Club, edged out Chef John Hutson of Equus Restaurant in Louisville by 0.5 points to win the second annual Great Kentucky Seafood Cook Off Monday July 16 in Louisville. Colley earned the right to represent Kentucky in the Great American Seafood Cook Off Aug. 3-5 in New Orleans.

Colley's winning dish was bourbon Kentucky prawns over sweet corn, Tabasco sauce and Kenny's white cheddar grits with Kentucky sorghum barbecue sauce. It was topped with baby spinach, sweet onions and a country ham hushpuppy. Hutson's runner-up dish of coun-

try ham-wrapped Kentucky hybrid striped bass took Colley's offering to the wire. The entire field of five chefs was tightly bunched as only four points out of a possible 70 separated first place from last and all five scored in the "gold standard" of culinary expertise.

Each chef prepared his or her best seafood dish in one hour using a featured Kentucky seafood ingredient provided by the Kentucky Department of Agriculture and the Kentucky Aquaculture Association. Dishes were judged on presentation; creativity, practicality and ease of preparation; composition and harmony of ingredients; correct preparation and crafts-

manship; and flavor, taste, texture and doneness.

The judges were Louisville chef Sara Gibbs; Sam Lawson, owner of Heartland Farm Equipment and a member of the Kentucky Agricultural Development Board; Lisa Sheehy of Keeneland magazine and Equine Media Services, and Robert Temple, seafood buyer for Whole Foods. The Jefferson County Community and Technical College Culinary Arts Program hosted the event.

Kentucky recipes submitted for the competition will be published online and in a special booklet devoted to the event.



Patrick Colley's winning dish.

Ginseng Digging Season Opens This Month

By Michael Fitzgerald

Ginseng continues to be a profitable enterprise for thousands of Kentuckians. Dealers and diggers alike have found an income stream that in some cases makes it possible for rural Kentucky property owners to continue to own their land and pay their taxes.

A dealer I spoke with this week was told by his broker to expect to pay around \$350 per pound for the root. Prices for this medicinal herb may go even higher if the drought begins to affect yields.

Millions of people around the globe are discovering the beneficial health effects of ginseng. Most ginseng roots are exported and later return to us as tea which is purported to aid the circulatory system.

I recently became the ginseng program coordinator for Kentucky. The past

harvest season yielded more than 13,000 pounds of ginseng, which was certified for export from our state, up more than 4,000 pounds from the previous year. These profitable roots grow both wild in the woods and cultivated in backyards and fields where artificial shade has been created. The plant grows best with about 70 or 80 percent shade.

Cornell University ginseng specialist Bob Beyfess states in his book "The Practical Guide to Growing Ginseng" that in the late 1980s and early 1990s ginseng became one of the most popular herbs on the market. In 1996 Beyfess said that more than \$100 million in American ginseng products was exported. While I don't have exact numbers on last year's data, it may be near \$200 million now.

Those interested in digging the root should remember that there is a digging season for wild ginseng. **The root can only be dug between Aug. 15 and Dec.**

1 of each year. Seeds adhering to a plant taken during the digging season shall be planted within fifty (50) feet of the location of the plant with no tool used other than the finger. **Ginseng growers are not to harvest the ginseng until it is five (5) years old or has three (3) prongs. The sale of ginseng to dealers begins Sept. 1 of each year and extends until March 31 of the following year.** Only dealers who hold a Certificate of Registration and Purchase Records proving the ginseng was dug legally and bought within the legal dates approved for purchasing shall be able to export the roots. Ginseng dug outside the borders of Kentucky is not allowed to enter the state unless it is certified in its state of origin. Likewise, ginseng dug within the borders of Kentucky shall not be allowed to leave the state unless certified by a Kentucky agriculture department official.

For more information about ginseng, call Michael Fitzgerald at (502) 564-0290, ext. 230.

Drought Creates Hay Shortage For Much of Kentucky

Staff Report

Since the April freeze and the drought that has affected much of the state in June and July, Kentucky's hay crop has been reduced by as much as 50 percent or more in some areas. This, coupled with some producers feeding hay as early as July, has hit livestock farmers almost as hard as the orchards that lost much of their crop across the state this year. Kentucky has always been a national leader in the number of cows and calves on pasture, partly because of our ideal environment to grow high-quality forages.

This year most of us will be looking for outside sources of hay to carry us through the winter. If you're one of those producers looking for hay or one of the few with an abundant hay crop, call us to get listed on the Kentucky Department of Agriculture's "Hay Hotline."

"We hope this hotline will help farmers looking for hay connect with those with hay for sale," said Mac Stone, director of the Value-Added Plant Production division. Hay producers and those looking for hay may call the toll-free hotline at **(888) 567-9589**. This number puts



them in touch with Lori Durham, who takes your name, phone number, and the type and kind of hay you are looking for, and this information is listed on our Web site. Go to www.kyagr.com, then click on programs, and then click on "Hay Hotline." Buyers looking for hay that has been tested by KDA for nutritional value should follow the same steps and click on "Hay Program." This link will take them to a database of tested hay.

We encourage producers who don't have an Internet connection to contact their county agricultural extension agent for assistance, because the information will constantly change as people sell or find the hay they need. Also please remember to call the hotline once you have

located the hay you need so we can take your name off the list. KDA has notified other state departments of agriculture around the country about our situation in hopes that their hay producers will list hay they may have available on our hotline. Producers should talk to their county agents to determine if feeding alternative feedstuffs and byproducts may be a good choice this year.

Farewell to our Retirees

This month we say goodbye to two long-time employees in KDA's Office of Agriculture Marketing. John McDonald with the Division of Show and Fair Promotion has retired to Mt. Sterling, where he will continue his Black Angus seed stock business. Coy Trapp of the Market News Branch retires to Frankfort, where he plans to run a daycare and garden. Thanks, guys! You've been great to work with over the years. We will miss you!

Advertising & Market Development Grants

Staff Report

The Kentucky Department of Agriculture's Division of Value-Added Plant Production helps the Kentucky Horticulture Council administer advertising and market development grants to Kentucky's horticulture industry. These grants provide assistance to producers that participate in KDA's "Kentucky Proud" program. Funds are still available for producers that may be marketing horticultural products this fall, or that may be taking educational trips this fall to learn about how to better market their products. Prior approval is required before purchasing advertising or taking trips that may be eligible for this program.

To download applications go to www.kyagr.com and click on the programs tab, and then click on grants. For more information about requirements

and eligibility contact Anna Lucio at 502-564-4983. Applications for the "Kentucky Proud" program can be found on our website under the programs tab.

Got Grapes?

If you own a winery or are growing grapes to sell to a winery check out our "Grape and Wine Program" page under the programs tab on the www.kyagr.com homepage. Stacia Alford, KDA's new grape and wine marketing specialist is collecting information from wineries looking to buy grapes, and producers with grapes for sale that will be posted weekly to this web site.

Stacia recently left the Governor's Office of Agriculture Policy to take the newly created grape and wine position created with funds from the Kentucky legislature for the grape and wine industry.

New Employees Join KDA's Marketing Team

Six new employees joined the Kentucky Department of Agriculture's marketing team since our last issue. They are Michael Fitzgerald, KDA's new Organic Program coordinator; Stephen Yates, director of Agritourism; Stacia Alford, grape and wine marketing specialist; Katherine Wheatley, dairy show coordinator for the Division of Show and Fair Promotion; Lashley Williams, sheep show coordinator for the Division of Show and Fair Promotion and Lori Durham, administrative assistant with the Division of Value-Added Plant Production. We are fortunate to have these enthusiastic people join us this year. You can reach any of KDA's marketing staff by calling (502) 564-4983.

Charley Corwin Lives The Cowboy Dream

Janna Miller
KDA Intern

Charley Corwin has a passion for the sport of bull riding and rodeoin'. For many years he dreamed of raising bucking bulls on his 386-acre 3-C Ranch near Ewing in Fleming County. About six years ago he bought some heifers, and he added the bucking bulls after a lengthy process. Today Corwin's rodeo bulls are well-known as many have traveled around the country.

After raising several bulls, Corwin built an arena. His first intent was to use the arena as a place to see if the bulls had any "buck," and occasionally it could be used as a practice facility for riders who are good friends of the Corwins. After he built the arena, Charley decided he wanted to involve the public and make rodeoin' a fun event for all ages. He hosted his first bull ride about four years ago and has continued to keep the tradition alive. Corwin says he hopes his 3-C Ranch will become a well-known agri-tourism site in Kentucky. Corwin hosts events throughout the year and wraps up with a "3- C Ranch Finals."

Corwin says he loves having people out to his farm and knowing that they are enjoying the sport that he admires so.

The rodeos have become a popular event, averaging 450-500 people. Corwin says that he tries to keep it a family event, trying to do things so that everyone feels involved. The kids take place in the "mutton' bustin' contest" (sheep riding). In the past a trailer has been set up with western tack so while the kids are riding sheep, Mom and Dad can shop around. Although the nature of rodeoin' isn't always clean and injuries will occur from time to time, Corwin tries to keep the events as clean and fun as possible.

Corwin is a member of the Southern Extreme Bull Ride Association. Several of Corwin's bulls have been in the Professional Bull Riders (PBR) Circuit. Riders from the PBR and International Professional Rodeo Association (IPRA) riders have ridden at 3-C Ranch. Corwin's bull "Bosco" was the 2006 Built Ford Tough Enterprise Bull in Omaha, Neb. The Built Ford Tough Series (BFTS) is the premier level of competition in the PBR.

At press time Corwin planned to have a Freestyle Bull Fighting Contest at his farm. The freestyle bull fighting contest "is the first one that I know of east of Mississippi River," Corwin said. At 3-C



Ranch Finals this year, a belt buckle and rodeo calf (choice of heifer or bull calf) will be awarded to the winner.

Charley Corwin also operates The Black Diamond Meat Company in Fleming County. He sells a variety of meat – lamb, goat, pork, beef and buffalo. All the meat is raised on his farm except the goat. He owns a large herd of buffalo and refers to buffalo meat as "the original red meat." All of Corwin's meat is drug- and hormone-free. The meat is processed at a Bardstown butcher shop and is USDA-inspected. Corwin is a certified Kentucky Proud participant.

Charles Corwin can be contacted by telephone at (606) 584-1717 or by e-mail at charleycorwin@yahoo.com.



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