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NOVEMBER 2019



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KENTUCKY FARM BUREAU
KFB100YEARS
EST. 1919



KENTUCKY FARM BUREAU NEWS
 Volume 18 | No. 9
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CONTENTS

[PRESIDENT'S COLUMN](#) 3

[COMMENT COLUMN](#) 5

[2019 KENTUCKY FARM BUREAU GOLF CLASSIC](#) 6

[KFB BEGINS NEW CENTURY WITH NEW MISSION STATEMENT](#) 7

[DON'T LET HER AGE FOOL YOU](#) 8

[JOHNSON COUNTY FARM FAMILY MAKING THE BEST OF AVAILABLE RESOURCES](#) 10

[COUNTY CORNER](#) 12

[MARKETS](#) 14

[A BLUEGRASS PRODIGY](#) 16

[CROPS UPDATE FROM THE USDA NASS KENTUCKY FIELD OFFICE](#) 18

[CANDID CONVERSATION](#) 20

[DOWN THE BACKROADS](#) 22

President's

COLUMN



As our harvest season winds down, I think it's safe to say, it was a tough year from a crop production standpoint, mostly due to extreme swings in the weather.

Last winter, we saw very wet conditions leaving many issues for our livestock producers and pastures. The rainy winter turned into a wet spring which had many of us on the farm thinking we were going to see a repeat of 2018, which proved to be the second wettest year on record.

But we know conditions can change quickly and that it did, as we moved into a very dry end of summer creating drought conditions with record high temperatures. In fact, the month of September was the driest on record and the second warmest, not to mention that the first few days of October saw record highs, as well.

As farmers, we recognize that we are always at the mercy of Mother Nature, and we continually work around those conditions, as best as we can. At the same time, we also recognize changes in our climate, which sometimes alters our production schedules, be it in planting or harvest seasons.

However, in bringing up that discussion, we have to take into account that not all the information we read or hear about changes in our climate is completely accurate. The idea of climate change brings some very emotional reactions on opposite ends of the spectrum.

Farm families have always adjusted to changing weather patterns knowing it comes with the territory. But we understand that recognizing fundamental changes is important as we move forward whether these changes are natural or otherwise.

Farmers are on the front line of having to manage with the natural climate and we should be focused on long-term changes or patterns in the weather. One advantage we have today is a broader knowledge of the environment, in general, which helps our farm families undertake better practices in their efforts to remain faithful stewards of this earth.

As is the case with any subject related to the farm, Kentucky Farm Bureau will look at this issue from a data/science-based perspective.

We are fortunate to live in a state with so many resources, such as the Kentucky Mesonet System, for instance, allowing us to take a look at climate conditions immediately and over an extended period of time.

We also have top research efforts taking place to evaluate the best production changes that need to be made based on weather patterns, if indeed there are any changes to be made at all.

While we certainly don't have a crystal ball to give us quick answers related to climate changes, or any other issues, we can use the resources we have in place to make good decisions and to best decide on priority issues as we continue to address situations that may affect our farm families.

One thing I am certain of, as an organization dedicated to the agriculture industry, we will continue to work on and research issues which concern our members and make sound decisions based on facts.

We will also continue to reach out to farm families in this state and across the country who have been adversely affected by weather events to help in any way we can, as we have done during this year of weather ups and downs, and will continue to do in the future.

Cover photo by Tim Thornberry
 It's pumpkin time in Kentucky!

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 President, Kentucky Farm Bureau

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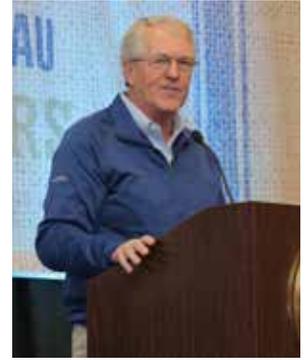


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COMMENT COLUMN



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Each November, Kentucky Farm Bureau's Resolutions Committee convenes, taking up the task of discussing policy changes and/or recommendations that will ultimately go to our voting delegates during our annual meeting.

The Resolutions Committee is comprised of two members, elected from each of the 11 Farm Bureau districts across the state, along with the Women's Committee Chair and the Vice-Chair of the Young Farmer Committee.

As resolutions come in from all the counties and our 26 advisory committees, those recommendations are categorized and compiled into a binder for each of the Resolutions Committee members to study.

There are approximately 1,000 resolution recommendations each year that are reviewed during a two-and-a-half-day session.

In going over each one, committee members decide if the resolution already exists in some way in the KFB policy book, or if something needs to be changed in that existing policy, or if something new needs to be added.

The committee will then make these recommendations to voting delegates at the KFB Annual Meeting. This process has been utilized as long as the organization has been around, and I think it is what makes KFB unique. It is probably the single most important thing that we do throughout the year, and as we get policies in from all these groups, it demonstrates the process of coming from the grassroots level.

This grassroots way of adopting policy has proven to be the foundation on which KFB was built and has worked well for us over the last 100 years. These recommendations, which come from our regular membership, are specific as to what is important to them as it relates to commodities, and issues on the farm, in their communities, and in our state and nation.

Our Congressional delegation, state officials, and legislators know how our process works, and I believe that is why they listen to what KFB has to say in knowing how we represent our membership.

Once our members have voted on their resolutions, the KFB Board bases their annual priority issues on what those members consider important to them. These recommendations can ultimately become a law or regulation, or they can simply be stated policy. But, either way, it's important to this organization to honor this process.

There are many things in our policies that aren't directly tied to agriculture, although they are related to our rural communities. For instance, one of our largest sections in the KFB state policy book is about education, which is important to all of us. Other examples include healthcare, taxation, and transportation, to name a few. If it is important to our members, then it has the possibility of being included in policy, period. And we honor that system as much today as we did in 1919.

In serving our mission of being the Voice of Kentucky Agriculture, our members want their voices heard to ensure this process and the success of the organization continues for another 100 years.

Eddie Melton, Chair

Resolutions Committee and KFB First Vice President

2019 KENTUCKY FARM BUREAU GOLF CLASSIC

Annual educational event was a “scorcher” of a success

The record-breaking heat experienced during this year’s Kentucky Farm Bureau (KFB) Golf Classic didn’t wilt any spirits, as more than 240 golfers made their way to Louisville’s Quail Chase Golf Club to be a part of an annual event which raises money for the KFB Educational Foundation.

Since the Foundation was established in 1953, over 1,800 scholarships worth nearly \$3 million has been raised thanks to events such as the Golf Classic and the generosity of its many participants and sponsors who take part every year.

This year’s Golf Classic marked the 24th for the event. KFB President Mark Haney said one of the reasons it has been successful for so long is because educating Kentucky’s young people is such an important priority.

“And it’s not just a priority for our organization, but for the many businesses that have teams participating each year, the individual golfers who take the time out of their schedules to be here, and the sponsors that make this great event possible,” he added.

“ Giving our young people the opportunity for a higher education is so important to us all.”

- Mark Haney

Over \$25,000 was raised thanks to this year’s Golf Classic. Haney expressed to the many participants his appreciation and said the relationships KFB builds with other organizations, business partners, and individuals are so critical to the success of the organization’s Education Foundation.

“Education is a vital component of who we are and what we do, and over the past 24 years, we have seen how important educational endeavors are to our community partners because of their involvement in the KFB Golf Classic,” he said. “While this may be a day of fun and fellowship for the many participants, we realize how important it is to raise funds for scholarships which enable many students to further their education.”



More than 240 golfers participated in this year’s KFB Golf Classic.

KFB BEGINS NEW CENTURY WITH NEW MISSION STATEMENT

“Vision 100” Committee takes up the charge to plan for the future

With 100 years of service to members and the agriculture industry under its belt, Kentucky Farm Bureau (KFB) is poised to begin the next 100 years with a new mission statement and a new committee to provide strategic planning along the way.

KFB President Mark Haney led the charge to create the “Vision 100” committee and said its members can utilize a storied history to create a path to a successful future.

“We want to be intentional in setting goals and then determining actions needed to achieve those goals on behalf of our organization,” he said. “This is an opportunity to celebrate our past, but more importantly, look to the future as we define our strategy for the next century.”

The committee consists of staff from the Federation and the Insurance company who will help guide strategic planning for the future of the entire organization, and is being co-chaired by KFB Second Vice President Sharon Furches and Organization Division Director Matthew W. Ingram.

Both noted how important it is to plan for the future to ensure the continued success of KFB.

“I have been a part of this organization at all levels for many years and I have seen firsthand the difference it makes

in the lives of its members and the communities in which they live,” said Furches. “But we can’t rest on our laurels and we must look forward as we celebrate our past. This committee will keep us moving in the right direction.”

Ingram echoed those sentiments and said looking ahead is something the organization has always done, in its efforts to serve its members.

“We have always made the effort to plan for the future and create goals for success,” he said. “With the introduction of the ‘Vision 100’ Committee, we have the opportunity to continue that process while creating new goals for a new century.”

The introduction of the new mission statement is the first change that went into effect, as a result of the committee’s work. On behalf of the committee, Furches recently presented it to the KFB Federation Board for approval.

“This revision doesn’t move us away from our original mission at all, but it does reflect a new era we are entering and fortifies our intention to make life better for all Kentuckians,” she said. “I appreciate our Board accepting the change as they offered encouragement for the work this committee is undertaking.”

KENTUCKY FARM BUREAU’S NEW MISSION STATEMENT

“Kentucky Farm Bureau is a grassroots organization dedicated to serving our membership family and their communities. As the Voice of Agriculture, we identify problems, develop solutions, promote economic success, and enhance the quality of life for all.”

DON'T LET HER AGE FOOL YOU!

Fifth Grade Student
Addison Arnett
demonstrates
veteran show skills at
Championship Drive

For anyone who has ever shown livestock, they understand how much work goes into caring for and working with their animals. It's early mornings and late nights and numerous county fairs, all in route to the big one; the state fair, and a chance at being a champion.

Addison Arnett knows well the rigorous routine that goes into being the best. This talented fifth grader from Montgomery County took top honors with her crossbred steer named Gus at this year's Championship Drive.

And although she was participating in her first Championship Drive event, being in the showring is second nature to her as she carries on a family tradition. Many members of her family have shown livestock including her parents, Rebecca and Chris. She began to continue that tradition by showing pigs at the age of three with the steers coming along by age nine.

"My parents have encouraged me a lot and helped me and corrected me when I did something wrong. That's how I've learned," she said.

Addison obviously quickly became familiar with the showring and is a veteran of the state fair already, beginning her stint there at the age of four, having been named Grand Champion in Novice Swine Showmanship by the time she was eight.

With all that experience behind her, it was only natural that she would make it to the Championship Drive, the pinnacle of livestock showing at the Kentucky State Fair. But winning at that level was not something she expected this first time out.



Addison Arnett posed with her Champion Steer, Gus, during the Championship Drive.

"I really didn't think I would win that night because there were a lot of competitive steers out there," she said. "As soon as I walked in that arena, I started getting nervous."

Addison gave much of the credit for the win to Gus who, she said, loves the spotlight.

"Of course, he loved it and was well-behaved, but I was so nervous. I had been in the spotlight before, but it was nothing like this," she said.

In spite of the nerves, and the fact she was leading around an animal that weighed in at 1375 pounds, the two took home top honors in their division.

"It's not easy to lead around a steer that big but Gus was good, and we had a really good bond," said Addison. "Every morning we'd get up early and work together even before school."

But this youngster doesn't keep all her show techniques to herself. She is involved in a farm club at school and recently brought a steer to a club meeting to demonstrate how she shows such large animals. She is also involved in her 4-H club, and has been since turning nine years old. In fact, she currently serves as vice president of her 4-H club.

Addison said she has a lot of fun working with the animals and tells her friends that having fun is the most important part of showing livestock. But beyond the fun, she connects with her animals in such a way that she also refers to them as friends.

“ I love doing this and when I grow up, get married, and have children of my own, I want to teach them to show livestock.”

- Addison Arnett

"Our whole Arnett family has done it and it makes me feel good knowing I have family willing to help me and support me," she said.

Addison's next stop is the North American International Livestock Exposition where she will make her show debut there with a steer named Hershey.

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Tyler and Andrea Ferguson on their Blessed Ridge Farm.

JOHNSON COUNTY FARM FAMILY MAKING THE BEST OF AVAILABLE RESOURCES

The Fergusons saw an opportunity in a place others might have missed

Getting to Flat Gap, Kentucky, is not the easiest of trips, but well worth it once you arrive. The small eastern Kentucky town is located in the heart of the mountain region of Johnson County as well as in the state's rich coal mining country.

Tyler Ferguson, Kentucky Farm Bureau's 2019 Young Farmer Committee Chair, and wife Andrea had a dream of owning their own farm in an area they called home. But large parcels of farmland are generally not the rule of thumb in this mountainous terrain.

In recognizing that fact, Ferguson discovered land that had previously been used for surface mining purposes, and saw an opportunity in a place many others might have overlooked.

"We have about 100 acres of farmland that is actually reclaimed strip mine land where we currently run 40 cows," he said. "We bought the land in 2008 and started clearing it to build a house and barn, and to get the pastures in shape."

Ferguson also utilizes his grandmother's nearby farm to cut hay on another section of the same reclaimed strip mine.

"We grew up in this area and descent, available land is scarce, so any flat land with grass, there was usually someone already grazing cows on it," he said.

But Ferguson, indeed, found some of the coveted flat land in his area that had once been home to a surface mine.

The land that now belongs to the Fergusons is referred to

as "pre-law" land or land that did not fall under the regulation of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977, which required coal companies to return strip mine land to pre-mining condition once surface mining had stopped.

Because the mining activities finished on this land before the law passed, it was left flat in an otherwise mountainous area, a fact that has worked well for re-growing the pastures, and has proven conducive for cattle production.

"People don't often see how useful this land is after mining, once the pastures come back. When we bought the farm, it was just brush and deer trails, so we began to work with it, clear a spot for the house, and turn it into our dream farm," he said.

Turning coal land into cattle land

But Ferguson had to go through some growing pains before the farm became a dream.

"I started with five cows and an electric fence and I thought I was in the cattle business," he said, with a laugh.

Ferguson soon found out there was more to that cattle business than having a few cows and a fence. So, he sold everything and started again, this time with more of a plan.

"It took me a few months to see that I had to re-group, so I sold everything I had, then started building a barn, putting up fences, dividing up pastures, and doing things the right way," he said.

This planned-method proved to be more expensive and slower than Ferguson would have liked, but it has turned out to be best for this young farmer.

“We’ve grown slowly but we have learned to get advice from others who have done the same thing,” he said.

In doing so, Ferguson took advantage of learning resources such as local extension, Farm Bureau’s Young Farmer program, the local cattlemen’s association and university services, all of which have helped make the farm successful. He also lives near his parents who are always willing to help around the farm.

And while he grew up working on his grandparent’s farm and for other local farmers, Ferguson considers himself a first-generation farmer.

“It’s not like I had never seen a farm, but we didn’t inherit any land or equipment and everything we have done here, we have done from scratch,” he said.

Ferguson admits that using the resources around oneself is not always the most convenient thing to do. For example, one farm he leases in order to cut hay is 30 miles away and offers some challenges in getting from one place to another.

“It’s not the most efficient way to get the hay that we need, but it is what I have available,” he said. “It’s what I can get that no one else has.”

Using what is available to him has become a way of farming life for Ferguson, but it has led to the dream farm he owns today.

“This farm is a perfect example of taking advantage of my available resources. This land had been dormant since the 70s and I had passed it by for years without taking a look,” he said. “But once I started an earnest search for farmland, I walked through it one day and saw the potential of what this land could be.”

Ferguson pointed out that a “turn-key” farm comes at a premium price but because he has moved slowly as to cash-flow the operation, he has stayed away from farm debt and built a place that will live on for generations.

“I found ground that had been passed by for 30 years, but when we looked at this from a long-term perspective, we saw the potential,” he said.

“We take a lot of pride in this farm and we just couldn’t be in a better place at a better time. And if you look hard enough, you may just find your dream farm is right outside your back door.”

- Tyler Ferguson

Incidentally, the Fergusons named the farm, “Blessed Ridge Farm.” A fitting name for a beautiful place that almost went unnoticed.



Top Photo: The Fergusons currently run about 40 head of cattle on their farm.
Bottom Photo: Tyler and Andrea enjoy what has become their dream farm.

COUNTY CORNER

Snapshots of County Farm Bureau activities



Breathitt and Wolfe County

Breathitt and Wolfe County Farm Bureaus partnered with UK Cooperative Extension Service for a farm safety field day. Pictured left to right: Erik Holbrook, John L. Turner, Rhea Price, Chuck Price, Pam Pilgrim, Roy Kelley, and Greg Potter.



Warren County

Warren County Farm Bureau had great participation in their Outstanding Youth Contest with 22 contestants held at their Annual Meeting at South Warren High School. Pictured are the Outstanding Youth Contestants. They also had six Variety Acts in the Variety Contest.



Shelby County

Shelby County Farm Bureau's Young Farmer Award was presented during their recent annual meeting. Pictured from left are: Matt Gajdzik, Shelby County FB President, Shelby County Young Farmer Chairs Nathan Buckler and Emily Buckler



Garrard County

Garrard County Farm Bureau held their KFB 100 Year Celebration at the local fairgrounds in October with 240 guests. They served hamburgers, hot dogs, BBQ pork and fixings.



Montgomery County

Montgomery County Farm Bureau recently hosted their local outstanding youth contest with an outstanding turn out of great, young, talented students.



Lyon County

Dr. Jay Akridge, left, is pictured holding a portrait of himself that will hang in the Lyon County Farm Bureau Hall of Fame, while his nephew, Logan Akridge is shown holding a portrait of his grandfather, Dean Akridge. Jay was inducted into the Hall of Fame and Dean was retroactively inducted at the Farm Bureau's annual dinner.



Mercer County

Mercer County Farm Bureau hosted their 1st Young Farmer Scholarship Golf Scramble.



Mason County

Mason County sixth-grade students learn about livestock animals and about how grains are used to feed animals and people during the Mason County Farm Bureau Field Day. Pictured are: Curtis Rosser, Ralph Cooper, Shelby Trimble, and Mike Walton.



Laurel County

Laurel County Farm Bureau's annual fish fry was held in September.



Trimble County

Members of Trimble County Farm Bureau attended the Ag Day event held at the county park.



Fayette County

The Fayette County Young Farmer Chili Cook-off was held October 18.



Union County

Union County Farm Bureau held its annual Safety Day in October with nearly 200 fifth-grade students in attendance.



Casey County

These teachers received \$250 mini grants from the Casey County Farm Bureau.

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MARKETS

KENTUCKY AG STATISTICS ANNUAL BULLETIN RELEASED

The Kentucky Agricultural Statistics 2019 Annual Bulletin is now available. This is the go-to source for information on Kentucky's 2018 crop and livestock production, farm numbers, cash receipts, cash rents and more – much of it detailed at the county level. The Annual Bulletin was compiled by the USDA-NASS Kentucky Field Office and can be downloaded at www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Kentucky/

APPLE HARVEST GREW FOUR PERCENT FROM 2018

This year's USDA forecast for the U.S. commercial apple crop is 10.6 billion pounds, up four percent from a year ago, as output gains in Western States outweigh declines in Eastern States. The top apple State, Washington, expects a 7.2-billion-pound crop, up seven percent from last year. Overall, larger production points to possible weakening of apple grower prices during the 2019/20 season (August-July). In July and August, apples prices were up 3.0-3.5 percent year over year, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. While USDA does not publish Kentucky's production, we have many apple growers to provide you with locally-produced apples and products. Many of these orchards are members of the KFB Certified Farm Market Program; learn more at kyfb.com/roadside.

PET FOOD MARKET EXPANDING WITH PREMIUM PRODUCTS

The value of U.S. dog and cat food exports reached nearly \$1.5 billion in CY 2018, and year-to-date 2019 export values are ten percent higher than the same period in 2018. This puts dog and cat food exports on par with hay exports in terms of value and eclipses any other prepared animal feeds. Canada is the primary market for U.S. dog and cat food exports, representing nearly half of the 700,000 metric tons exported in 2018; Japan and Mexico are distantly second

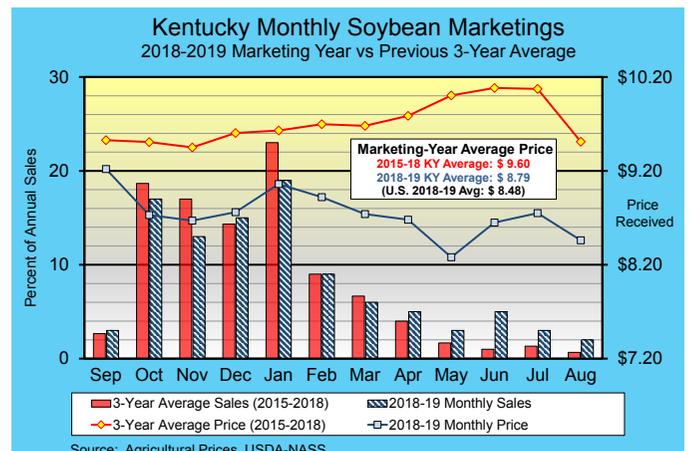
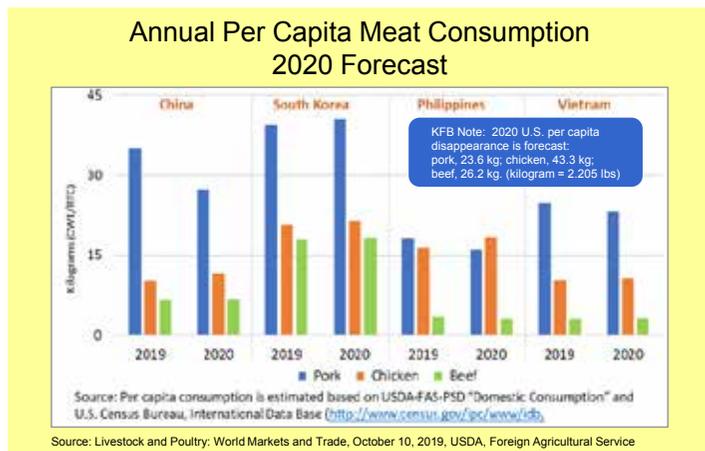
and third. While 2018 export volume was similar to 2004, the value was quadrupled. One reason for rising unit value of pet food is the growth of "super premium" products, including high-protein, meat-based pet food. USDA expects rising incomes and more pet ownership will drive export value even higher.

BROILER PRODUCTION AND PRICE HIGHER IN 2020

August broiler production, when adjusted for slaughter days, was 3.2 percent higher year over year. This increase was comprised of a 2.2-percent increase in bird slaughter and a one percent increase in average bird weight. Data suggest the industry intends to increase the broiler breeder flock relative to last year. Based on the expectation for a larger broiler-type laying flock, the 2020 production forecast was raised to 44.4 billion pounds, or about two percent over 2019. Exports are also forecast to grow two percent in 2020 to 7.25 billion pounds. USDA updated its broiler price forecasts. Recent price improvement led to a half-cent increase for 2019 to 87.50 cents per pound (95 cents for current quarter); with production trending higher, USDA lowered its 2020 annual price forecast by a penny to 91 cents per pound.

U.S. CANOLA PRODUCTION HITS RECORD

U.S. production of canola in 2019/20 is forecast at a record 3.71 billion pounds based on near records for acreage (2.04 million acres) and yield (1,860 pounds per acre). Despite a large domestic harvest, U.S. canola imports for 2019/20 are forecast to rise sharply to 1.5 billion pounds from 1.2 billion last year. Abundant supplies should boost demand by crushers. With rising vegetable oil demand, the domestic crush may reach a record 4.4 billion pounds from 3.8 billion in 2018/19. However, the large carryover of Canadian stocks may preclude a major price rally from the robust canola demand.





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Mackenzie Bell plays on stage at the Bluegrass Music Hall of Fame and Museum.

A BLUEGRASS PRODIGY

Mackenzie Bell continues a Kentucky tradition

Of all the things Kentucky is known for, one Ohio County youth thinks bluegrass music is at the top of the list.

Mackenzie Bell has been involved in this musical genre for many of her 13 years and is quickly becoming one of the most accomplished fiddle players of anyone her age, or otherwise.

"I was always interested in music to begin with because I have always had a good, musically-based family," she said.

With that family foundation, Bell said being involved in music was all she has ever wanted to do.

"I started playing at the age of eight and since then, I knew this is what I wanted to do my whole life," she said. "It's what makes me feel confident."

And being at the epicenter of the bluegrass world, her choice seemed natural, fortifying her passion for a kind of music born in the Commonwealth.

Ohio County is home to the "Father of Bluegrass" Bill Monroe, and down the road, in Owensboro, is the Bluegrass Music Hall of Fame & Museum where Bell spends a lot of time perfecting her craft.

Not only does this venue pay homage to bluegrass and its pioneers, but provides a place to take lessons, something Bell has taken advantage of, learning from her mentor and the museum's education director, Randy Lanham.

"One thing I found out quickly about Mackenzie is that she is driven," he said. "Week after week she would come in and I was like, 'wow.' She wants this and she has worked really hard."

Lanham added that it didn't take him long to realize what Bell has is a God-given talent.

"She is just one of the best students that I've ever had, and at only 13 years old, she is already getting attention all over the world," he said. "I mean they're playing her songs on

radio stations in other countries."

Bell has already recorded multiple CD's and has taken every opportunity she can to get in front of audiences and play with some of the best bluegrass musicians in the business. But she is very much a traditionalist in a world where many in this genre are taking a more modern path to stardom.

"Most of the young people that I know that play this kind of music are wanting to do something more modern, but I want to keep that traditional bluegrass alive," she said.

Bell added that she feels as though if the more traditional bluegrass style of music isn't played and nurtured, it will eventually go away, and she seems intent on doing all she can to keep that from happening.

In doing so, Bell has discovered the value in giving back to the industry, as well, often taking her talents to local nursing homes to play for residents.

"It's fun for me to play and see people smile and it really helps to know that if somebody's having a rough time it may help them lighten the load. It just makes me feel really proud," she said.

Bell loves to play in front of an audience whether it is at the local nursing home or in front of a big crowd. She said in stepping on stage she becomes a completely different person.

"When I was younger, I was always shy and never wanted to talk to anybody. But they say the second I stand on stage, I'm completely different," she said. "And it makes me really happy to be able to play because fiddling is my dream and my life."

If the success she is having so far is any indication, her dreams are definitely coming true. By the way, she recently won the Georgia State Fiddling Competition. Hope she has plenty of room in her trophy case; she's going to need it.

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Corn production is forecast at 258 million bushels, according to the latest NASS information.

CROPS UPDATE FROM THE USDA NASS KENTUCKY FIELD OFFICE

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) (recently) released the August Crop Production report.

Dry conditions during September allowed harvest to proceed at a normal pace, but hurt soybean yields. Some later planted corn fields were also impacted by the drought, but overall the yields remain good.

Corn production in Kentucky is forecast at 258 million bushels, down three percent from the September forecast and up 20 percent from the previous crop.

Yield was estimated at 178 bushels per acre, up one bushel from last month and up three bushels from the 2018 level. Acres for harvest as grain were estimated at 1.45 million acres, up 220,000 acres from 2018.

The U.S. corn production is forecast at 13.8 billion bushels, down slightly from the September forecast and down four percent from 2018. Based on conditions as of October 1, yields are expected to average 168.4 bushels per acre, up 0.2 bushels from last month and down 8.0 bushels from 2018.

Area harvested for grain is forecast at 81.8 million acres, down slightly from the September forecast and up slightly from 2018.

Soybean production for Kentucky is forecast at 82.8 million bushels, down eight percent from the September forecast and down 16 percent from 2018.

Yield was estimated at 49 bushels per acre, down four bushels from last month and down two bushels from a year ago. Acreage for harvest as beans was estimated at 1.69 million acres, down 240,000 acres from the previous year.

U.S. soybean production is forecast at 3.55 billion bushels,

down two percent from the September forecast and down 20 percent from last year. Based on October 1 conditions, yields are expected to average 46.9 bushels per acre, down 1.0 bushels from last month and down 3.7 bushels from last year. Area for harvest is forecast at 75.6 million acres, down slightly from the September forecast and down 14 percent from 2018.

Kentucky burley tobacco production is forecast at 77.9 million pounds, down five percent from the September forecast and down three percent from 2018.

Yield was projected at 1,900 pounds per acre, unchanged from last month and up 300 pounds from the 2018 crop. Harvested acreage was estimated at 41,000 acres, down 9,000 acres from last year's crop.

For the burley producing states production is forecast at 91.8 million pounds, down nine percent from last year. Burley growers plan to harvest 48,600 acres, down 20 percent from 2018.

Yields were expected to average 1,889 pounds per acre, up 244 pounds from last year.

Production of Kentucky dark fire-cured tobacco is forecast at 29.5 million pounds, up two percent from the September forecast and down 16 percent from the previous year. Dark air-cured tobacco production is forecast at 19.4 million pounds, down four percent from the September forecast and up one percent from last year.

Alfalfa hay production by Kentucky farmers is forecast at 368,000 tons, down 18 percent the 2018 level. Other hay production is estimated at 4.80 million tons, up three percent from last year.



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CANDID CONVERSATION

KFB Candid Conversation presents a discussion about the topical issues facing the agricultural industry and rural communities in a question and answer format. In this column, Dr. Stuart Foster, State Climatologist and Director of the Kentucky Mesonet Weather Data System located at Western Kentucky University (WKU), discusses weather changes, weather data collection, and the value of such climate information.

For those who may not know about the Kentucky Mesonet System, could you explain what it is and what it does?

The Kentucky Mesonet is our statewide weather and climate monitoring infrastructure, which is a wonderful asset for the state and we're one of very few states in the country that have a network anything like it. It consists, currently, of 71 automated weather stations across Kentucky which collect observations every five minutes throughout the day, and we collect, process, and make that data available to the general public, to our state agencies, and to the National Weather Service.

Why is such a network so important to have, and how long has it been in place?

On a beautiful, clear, fair-weather kind of day, having observations every five minutes probably isn't critical for most things. But when we get into an active weather situation where we've got the threat of severe weather and storms developing across the state, or winter weather situations, or flash flooding, those observations can be really critical. With the amount of severe weather that we get hit with here in Kentucky and recognizing the importance and variability of our climate, WKU developed a proposal to receive an appropriation to be able to begin development of the Kentucky Mesonet



Dr. Stuart Foster, State Climatologist and Director of the Kentucky Mesonet Weather Data System

with our first station being installed locally in Bowling Green at the WKU Farm in June of 2007. That's when our first observations were collected.

What happens to all the data you collect from these stations?

In emphasizing the importance of our partnerships, the data goes to the National Weather Service and it also goes to the Kentucky Division of Emergency Management's Emergency Operation Center. In doing so, the Mesonet stations help to enhance public safety across the state, whether it's the station in your county or the station in the next county over, providing very critical, near real-time data and information about weather conditions. But the data is also available for anyone who goes to the website (www.kymesonet.org). And of course, our data becomes part of the climate record as we move forward.

What are some things about the Mesonet that are perhaps more acclimated to agriculture?

There's so much of this information available for the benefit of farmers. We help them track growing degree days using our temperature data, as well as precipitation for monitoring crop development. Thus, it allows farmers to better understand how the weather affected their operations after the growing season or after an extreme weather event. Many of the stations also have the capability to measure soil moisture and soil temperatures. That data is available, I believe, now in over 40 sites across the state and we're continuing to invest in soil monitoring at our existing stations and certainly the new stations. We have also recently begun monitoring temperature inversions to aid decision making when scheduling field operations.

One would assume the data stations have had a busy 2019 with some of the swings in weather conditions experienced over the course of the year.

It actually seems like our weather over the last several years has been a rollercoaster ride in many ways and this year was certainly like that. We started out wet, in particular in February, and then again in June. In fact, based on the data from our stations, some areas in the state had received 70 to 80 percent of their average annual precipitation by the end of June prompting us to look at the real possibility of breaking our statewide record set back in 2011. But then, when we got to August for some, and September, the faucet was shut off and the heat was turned on breaking a record for being the driest September since 1895. So, it's just a remarkable year so far and of course it is not over yet.

Are we able to see extended weather pattern changes with the data you have and earlier recorded data?

While we have seen a gradual increase in both temperature and precipitation through the growing season, what strikes me are the remarkable swings that we have seen in our weather patterns, particularly between extremes of wet and dry. The one thing that's remarkable for us and really stands out would be that the last 10 years or so have been, in spite of the September drought and in spite of the fall drought in 2016, and severe drought in 2012, a remarkably wet period. In fact, it has been the most prolonged and wettest period of our climate record going back to the late 1800s. So, that's one thing that stands out, in the midst of all that wet weather, we can still have droughts. The Mesonet data will help us, in the long-term, evaluate those changes and identify trends that may give clues of future weather patterns.

You are a member of the KFB Water Management Working Group. How valuable has that relationship been to you and other stakeholders in water resource management efforts?

I would say the Water Management

Working Group, created by KFB, has been transformational across the state, certainly from my perspective as state climatologist. It has brought together people with a common interest not just in the well-being of agriculture and farmers, but a common interest in the well-being of our communities across the state. We've been able to get people at the table that had the interest, the resources, and the capability to really focus efforts to better understand our needs for water resources, going forward. I think it's really helped to focus us to the point where we can be more proactive as we look to the future of Kentucky. From my conversations with colleagues in other states and other parts of the country, I can't say that it's unprecedented, but I haven't seen this kind of initiative and cooperative spirit anywhere. This is going to benefit everybody over the long-term. When it comes to issues around water, they're important to everybody whether it's rural or urban communities. Water is just a very unifying issue for us to deal

with. It's exciting when you are able to work with a group that you know has the ability to get people together to actually get things done and move us in a positive direction.

And now for the ultimate question, do you get a lot of people knocking on your door asking what the weather is going to be like?

Well, I get that question a lot, and of course the reality is, I don't have anything to do with any of that. However, as we probably have heard many times, most people wouldn't be able to start a conversation if it wasn't for the weather, so the subject provides a way to talk to folks. And even though I get a lot of complaints when it's not so good, I really appreciate the folks that say thanks when we get a nice day.

To see the full interview with Dr. Foster, visit: www.kyfb.com/candid.



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DOWN THE BACKROADS

By Tim Thornberry

A good buddy of mine is an automotive technician and works on some of the newest and most technologically advanced vehicles on the road. During a recent conversation, I mentioned to him how surprised I am at the number of automobiles being manufactured these days without turn signals, to which he replied, "That's not true, all of them come with turn signals."

He was very amused at my statement, but I told him how puzzled I was to hear that because I seldom see anyone using their signals. How could you have something so necessary at your fingertips and not use it!

Obviously, I know that turn signals are standard on all vehicles. My point is, so many of us have this valuable resource available to us yet so many fail to use them.

In thinking about this, I realized there are many "resources" we have available to use either for safety purposes, learning opportunities, or simply for convenience sake, that we don't take advantage of.

For instance, our clothes washer has about a gazillion settings on it to match a gazillion clothes-washing situations, yet I only use the "normal" wash. Granted, my wife cringes when I try to use the washer so, for me, keeping it simple is better.

But these new modern machines offer so many advances yet many of us fail to ever use them for whatever the reason. By the way, my dryer is the same way.

And what about the microwave oven. I must admit, I feel successful if I can just heat up my coffee in the morning but there are so many settings on the newer models that I would imagine, most people never use.

Moving away from our household appliances, I am reminded of the time I had a plant problem at my house. I couldn't seem to keep any of my outdoor plants living even though I was trying every fertilizer on the market.

My neighbor stopped by one day as I was digging up one more failed attempt. He suggested I call my local extension office and ask for help. Of course, how could I forget this valuable resource. One call and one visit to check my soil and magically the problem went away.

Another valuable service I often fail to think about is my nearby public library. I must admit, I don't often take the time to read books, but I do love them. When I was a kid, my

brother and I hardly missed a Saturday when we did not visit our local library.

I didn't have to really check out anything, but just walking around and browsing through all the titles was enjoyable.

Our library must have a book related to any subject you could ever imagine, yet I rarely take the time to stop by and utilize this valuable place.

Taking advantage of the resources around us seems like a no-brainer. But, I'm as guilty as anyone in overlooking them or failing to take the time to use them.

So, I have made a promise to myself to learn all the settings on my washing machine and microwave, and I promise to never try to figure out planting problems on my own again. And the next time I drive by the library, I will make an effort to stop and once again browse through the gazillion books in there.

Oh, and I also intend to always use my turn signals, as I travel down the backroads.

The advertisement features a photograph of three horses (two dark, one light) in a field. In the top left corner, there is a circular logo for the Kentucky Farm Bureau (KFB) with the text "Voice of Kentucky Agriculture" next to it. A green banner with white text reads "Post your **FREE** Classified Ad at **Farm2Ranch.com**". At the bottom, the "FARM2 RANCH.com" logo is displayed in large, bold letters.

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