

P.O. Box 640, N. Scituate, RI 02857

Establishes Voluntary Standard The Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) is establishing a voluntary standard for a naturally raised marketing claim that livestock producers may request to have verified by the USDA. A growing number of livestock producers and marketers are trying to capture value-added opportunities by using alternative production methods to meet the demands of consumers and markets seeking meat and meat products from naturally raised livestock. This voluntary standard will allow producers to utilize AMS' voluntary, third party verification services to provide validity to naturally

raised livestock claims, and, in certain cases, access to markets that require AMS verification. Verification is accomplished through an audit of the production processes in accordance with the procedures that are contained in Part 62 of Title 7 of the Code of Federal Regulations. For more information go to www.ams.usda.gov/ SAT or contact Martin O'Connor, Room 2607-S, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Washington, DC 20250-0254; 202-720-4486, 202-720-1112 or Martin.OConnor@usda.gov.

> Daniel Maltby, owner of River Valley Fencing, has been farming for more than 20 years and installing custom-designed agriculture fences since 1997.

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FYI For Your Information

Agricultural Marketing Service



A Message from the President of RIRLA

from Bill Coulter, President, RIRLA

Hello All! The winter is upon us and I can't wait for spring. As our calendar year ends, March 31st, I would like to summarize our past year and talk about our annual meeting.

First, this past year we started processing locally which has been a huge accomplishment. We are very proud of the fact that many of our members have participated in this process. We started in April and by years end, we sent 64 beef, 66 hogs and 37 lambs. Even though processing had a few glitches, we have worked with Johnston Beef and Westerly Packing to iron things out and we will continue to try to make things better.

With all the emphasis on processing, many forget the other items the Officers of this association, along with the Board of Directors have taken on. Our nonprofit status has been a long drawn out process. Meetings with state tax officials, lawyers and accountants has been very time consuming, however, very promising. We hired Kim Ziegelmayer as our Executive Director, which has helped tremendously in this area. With Kim being able to meet and coordinate with all involved, we should soon have our non-profit status.

Also this past year we saw the DEM Division of Agriculture sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Health which allows the Division of Ag to carry out the inspection process for On-Farm Sales. The Health Department will still issue the permits, but the assistance from the Division of Agriculture will speed the process up tremendously.

We also have a committee working to develop a website and a grant committee to look for future funding. As I have always stated in the past, this is a membership organization and anyone willing to attend our monthly board meetings are welcome to attend.

Finally, I would like to talk about the

Annual Meeting which is March 18, 2009 at the West Greenwich Elks. This is a great opportunity to hear from the rest of the Executive Committee. The Department of Health and DEM Division of Agriculture will also speak. Bruno Trombino of Westerly Packing will be answering questions about our cut sheets and options about cutting. The last item on the agenda will be the election of officers. The nominating committee has put forth a slate. I will not be seeking re-election at this time, but I encourage everyone to endorse this slate of officers:

Patrick McNiff – President Louis Vinagro – Vice President Will Wright – Treasurer Heather Minto – Secretary

It has been a great privilege to lead this group for the past year, and I thank all involved.

BILL COULTER

Rhode Island Raised Livestock Association 2009 Annual Meeting

March 18, 2009, 6:30 pm West Greenwich Elks Lodge 42 Nooseneck Hill Road (Rte 3) West Greenwich, RI

The Annual meeting of the Rhode Island Raised Livestock Association will be held on March 18th at 6:30 at the Elks Lodge in West Greenwich. RIRLA has planned an informative evening for RI farmers. The meeting will be an opportunity to learn more about RIRLA and what it offers members.

Farmers will get valuable information on how to obtain permits to sell their meat; learn more about different cuts of meat for marketing; hear about the Farm bill and what it has to offer RI farmers and sign up for upcoming educational workshops and pasture walks. In addition, there will be an open forum for members to tell the Association what they would like to see in 2009 and beyond; as well as opportunities for members to get more involved.

We encourage all current members to attend, and ask them to invite all others they know who may be interested in joining the RIRLA. (*Meeting, cont. page 3*)

A Message from the Director of RIRLA, Kim Ziegelmayer



Hello to all RI Raised Livestock Association members. We are deep in the throes of winter and I hope all of you are able to rest up a little bit before the rush of spring comes along. The Association continues to move forward and make progress in many areas, though never as fast as we would like.

The big news is our upcoming annual meeting being held on March 18, 6:30 pm at the West Greenwich Elks Lodge on Rte. 3 in West Greenwich. The steering committee has put a lot of thought and effort into planning the meeting. The agenda has much to offer current and new members including: information about how to obtain permits from the RI Department of Health to sell your meat; a seminar on cuts of meat and how to choose cuts for processing; information about the Farm Bill and how the Natural Resources Conservation Service can help farmers; announcement of scheduled pasture walks and an opportunity to tell the Association what you would like to see in 2009 and beyond. Of course we are always looking to get current and new members more involved in the Association on committees and the board.

The Processing Scheduling Service closed out 2008 with a total of 30 farms sending one hundred sixty seven head of livestock to be processed throughout the year. The breakdown is: 64 beef; 66 hogs and 37 lambs. As with any new business, there have been some bumps in the road and issues that needed to be addressed, however we consider our first year a success. RI farmers now have a locally based processing system that not only saves travel time, supports local business but also adds to the RI economy, a win-winwin situation. Conservatively estimated, over \$200,000 was added to the RI economy in 2008 through the processing scheduling service. Contact Kim to schedule your animals.

Real progress has been made on the permitting process. Permits from the RI Department of Health are required to sell meat retail to the public. MANY thanks to Ken Ayars, Chief of the RI Division of Agriculture, Dr. Scott Marshall, RI State Veterinarian and the Department of Health for all their hard work in getting Health and Agriculture on the same

The Association continues to explore the idea of a "Rhody Raised" line of meats.

page and making the process much more straightforward for farmers. Dr. Marshall is the contact person for all permit applications. He can be reached at 222-2781 ext. 4503.

More good news on permits! Technical assistance permit packages (work supported by the USDA RBEG) will be available soon and will be previewed at the annual meeting. These packages will provide farmers with a step-by-step process and the appropriate forms to obtain either a farmers' market (market cash register); on-farm sales (retail food peddler); or wholesaler (meat/ poultry processor-wholesale) permit. With the application packages and the improved communication between the Department of Health and the Division of Agriculture, getting permits will become MUCH easier than before! Another one of the great benefits of being a member.

The website is also moving forward and should be up and running by late spring! The website committee has met and work has begun. Many thanks to the committee (Pat McNiff, Louie Vinagro and Jane Christopher) for all the hard work. If you have any suggestions of features you would like to see on the website please contact Kim Ziegelmayer at *directorrirla@cox.net* or 401-575-3348 or one of the other members. Your input is greatly appreciated.

The RI Raised Livestock Association is officially a non-profit in RI. The Association is waiting to hear from the IRS regarding the federal non-profit designation. Non-profit status will allow RIRLA to apply for grants and potentially accept corporate sponsors. RIRLA's goal is to become self-sustaining but as in any business start-up you need money (in the form of a loan or grant) to float the business until it "gets on its feet."

I will be attending - as will several RIR-LA members - the Harvest New England Marketing Conference from February 25-26 (supported by a USDA SARE grant). As was just mentioned in a paragraph above, the Association continues to explore the idea of a "Rhody Raised" line of meats. I hope to bring back some marketing ideas for possible "Rhody Raised" products. These marketing ideas could be used not only by the Association for its own products but could also be shared with members to assist them in their marketing efforts. Again, another benefit of membership in RI Raised Livestock Association.

Well, that is about it for now. I would like to extend a huge thank you to all of the dedicated volunteers who make this the great organization that it is. A special thank you to the Officers of the Board and Jane Christopher and Chris Ulrich – who put so much energy into the production of this newsletter. Please don't hesitate to contact me at 401-575-3348 or *director-rirla@cox.net* to schedule your animals, discuss an idea of voice any concerns you may have.



Annual Meeting (from page 1)

Agenda for Annual Meeting 2009

- 1. Introduction President (5 min.)
- Invited VIPs/Dignitaries Lt. Gov. Elizabeth Roberts, Senator Sue Sosnowski (5 min.)
- 3. Treasurer's report Will Wright (5 min.)
- Executive Director report accomplishments, membership numbers, processing report (15 min.)
- 5. Permits Health Dept., Div. of Ag. (15 min.)
- 6. Processing Bruno Trombino, cut sheets workshop (15 min.)
- 7. Planned events pasture walks (10 min.) Hidden Meadow, Watson Farm, Casey Farm
- 8. Member forum/feedback what has been good in 2008? What do farmers want in 2009 and beyond? (15 min.)
- 9. Election of Officers, amendments to the By-Laws

For more information contact: Kim Ziegelmayer, Director, RIRLA P.O. Box 640, N. Scituate, RI 02857 401-575-3348 director-rirla@cox.net

Membership Renewal

It is also time to **RENEW** your membership! Great news - member dues have remained the same for 2009: \$30 for RI residents and \$100 for out of state members. A great price for member benefits that include: access to USDA labeling; education and networking opportunities; quarterly newsletter; technical assistance; potential group marketing "Rhody Raised" line of products and more. Membership increased from 45 members at the beginning of 2008 to 73 members by January 2009. We hope to see 100 members by the beginning of 2010.

Please renew your annual membership using the enclosed mail-in form or renew by paying your dues at the Annual Meeting on March 18th. Thank you for your continued support!

Rhode Island Raised Livestock Association gratefully acknowledges Poulin Grains for their generous sponsorship of this quarterly issue! RIRLA wishes to thank our funders, the RI Foundation and the USDA for their support.







Tail Docking In Sheep

By Don Bixby, ALBC

ocking is the process of removing part of the lamb's tail. Traditionally, wooly sheep have been docked to prevent fecal matter from accumulating on the tail and hindquarters of sheep and lambs, especially in the season of lush growth when the droppings become unusually sticky. This is a longstanding practice in North America and Australia because of the abundance of flies. This fecal mat provides an ideal place for flies to lay eggs leading to a dreadful condition called "fly strike" in which the rear end of the sheep gets eaten by maggots, a far worse fate than tail docking. Research has indicated that tail docking greatly reduces fly strike (wool maggots), while having no apparent ill effect on lamb mortality or production. Docking also facilitates shearing; not many shearers want to shear sheep with long tails.

But a sheep's tail has a purpose. It protects the sheep's anus, vulva, and udder from weather extremes. Sheep lift their tails when they defecate and use their tails, to some extent, to scatter their feces. It supports the connecting tissues of the anus and vulva – when docked too short anus and vaginal prolapses are much more likely. So the decision to dock and how to do it is one of thoughtful responsibility.

Some markets may discriminate against tailed lambs, since having a tail lowers dressing percent and removal may require an additional worker on the kill floor. On the other hand, ethnic buyers of lambs often prefer undocked lambs. For the Muslim Festival of Sacrifice, unblemished lambs are often preferred for slaughter. An unblemished lamb is one that has not been docked, castrated, or had its horns removed. According to a 2002 Animal Health Survey, 91.7 percent of U.S. lambs are docked. Because hair sheep such as Katahdins, Dorpers, St. Croix, or Barbados lambs do not have long, wooly tails and/or wool on the underside of their tails, docking has

less importance. Lambs from the Northern European short-tail breeds such as Shetland, Romanov, and Finnsheep, also do not require docking. Some breeders of wool breeds also do not dock tails, while others dock only the ewe lambs. Some breeds such as Black Welsh Mountain prohibit the docking of tails, while other primitive breeds such as Jacob, Hog Island, and a few others discourage the practice.

Banding

The simplest and most common method of tail docking is to apply a rubber ring (band) to the tail using an elastrator. The band cuts off the blood supply to the tail, and the tail falls off in 7 to 10 days. Banding is not painless and lambs should be at least 24 hours old before bands are applied, and bands should only be applied during the lamb's first week of life. The use of a local anesthetic, such as lidocaine, can reduce the pain felt by the lamb.

When the elastrator technique is used, it is very important that lambs be protected against tetanus, since the band creates an anaerobic environment that is conducive to the tetanus organism. If the lamb's dam was not vaccinated or her vaccination status is unknown, the tetanus anti-toxin should be administered at the time of tail docking. The anti-toxin provides immediate short-term immunity whereas the tetanus toxoid, while longer lasting, takes 10 days to 2 weeks to cause an immune response.

Other Methods

Tails can also be cut off using a knife; however, this technique is not recommended because it can cause excessive bleeding. An electric docking iron cuts and cauterizes the tail simultaneously and is probably the most humane method of tail docking. It can be used on slightly older lambs. An emasculator can be used for docking. An emasculator has both a cutting and crushing mechanism. The crushing mechanism seals the blood vessels on the tail remaining on the lamb, while the cutting edge effectively removes the tail. The emasculator should be left on the tail for approximately 30 seconds to help prevent bleeding. A Burdizzo is similar to the emasculator except it does not have a cutting mechanism. A knife must be used to cut off the tail (inside the Burdizzo). A "baby" (9 in.) burdizzo

should be used for lambs. **How Long?**

There is considerable discussion about the length of tail that should remain. Legislation in the United Kingdom requires that the tail stub (dock) be left long enough to cover the ewe's vulva and ram's anus. Most other countries follow similar practices. The American Veterinary Medical Association, American Association of Small Ruminant Practitioners, and American Sheep Industry Association all agree that tails should be removed no shorter than the distal end of the caudal tail fold. Tails docked shorter than this may result in an increased incidence of rectal prolapses. This is because short-tail docking damages the muscles and nerves



used by the lamb's anus. Short tail dock ing may also contribute to the incidence of vaginal prolapses, and New Zealand researchers found that short-docked ewes suffered higher rates of carcinoma of the vulva.

"Extreme" tail docking, as practiced in sheep for show compromises the welfare of the sheep and gives the sheep industry a "black eye." It should be considered unethical by all producers. Some states have adopted policies mandating minimum tail lengths for lambs shown by youth.



Show animals are often very severely docked to present a smooth rounded rear end so beloved by judges.

(Reprinted with permission from American Livestock Breeds Conservancy)

Berkshire Pigs

IRLA members Louis & Maria Vinagro of Hill Farm in Foster, RI, own a small farrow to finish operation with pasture raised and *hormone-free animals.* With the help of RIRLA all of their animals are processed locally as bacon, smoked hams, sausage, etc. for retail sale All of these products can be purchased directly from their farm or at various farmers markets. Hill Farm is currently transitioning their hog breed of choice to the Berkshire Hog. They have just picked up their first shipment of registered pure breed Berkshires in Pennsylvania and by summer expect to be handling this breed exclusively. Here is a brief history of this breed.

Berkshire pigs are one of the oldest identifiable breeds. These black hogs, with white "points" (white areas on their feet, snout and tail) were documented in the English "shire of Berks" over 350 years ago and made their way to the United States in the early 1800s. In 1875, breeders formed the American Berkshire Association (ABA), making it the first breeders group and swine registry in the world.

The original Berkshire was a reddish or sandy colored hog, sometimes spotted. This would account for the sandy hair still sometimes seen in the white areas of some modern Berkshires. Later this basic stock was refined with a cross of Siamese and Chinese blood, bringing the black with white points color pattern we see today along with the quality of more efficient gains. This was the only outside blood that has gone into the Berkshire breed within the time of recorded livestock history. For 200 years now the Berkshire bloodstream has been pure, as far as the records are known today.

Berkshires are hardy, have good mothering capabilities and they perform very well outdoors, especially when grazing on pasture. Their meat is darker than commercial pork and far more flavorful than the pork found in your grocery store freezer.

The Berkshire Breed paved the way for better swine production and improvement in the United States and Europe, as well. Berkshires have had great influence upon the swine industry the past 100 years, and the Breed Association has made people aware of the importance of purebred animals. Types have changed in the swine industry due to economic needs, and Berkshires have played some of the most distinguishable roles in the Swine Industry. In the 1940's and early 1950's, Berkshires set a pace in market hog shows never to be surpassed - during this era, Berkshires won more consecutive Chicago International Truckload Championships than any other breed. Their winnings have never been duplicated.

During the past several years the Berkshire has made great strides of improvement towards meeting the demands of the swine industry. Selection pressure has been applied toward those traits of great economical importance – fast and efficient growth, reproductive efficiency, cleanness, and meatiness.

This is indeed a splendid example of an improved breed of livestock.

Free Small Business Counseling Services Now Available

RICAPE and the Rhode Island Small Business Development Center join forces to serve farmers. Start Your Next Move Here!

The RI Center for Agriculture Promotion & Education (RICAPE) and the RI Small Business Development Center (RISBDC) have signed a memorandum of understanding to jointly develop and deliver business development services to Rhode Island's farmers.

The partnership allows farmers access to small business services through a leading small business agency collaborating with Johnson & Wales University that runs Colleges of Business, Culinary as well as Hospitality and Tourism within. Stu Nunnery, RICAPE Director, says that this unique blend of skills, expertise and infrastructure are critical and timely adjuncts that will assist Rhode Island's farmers to grow and expand their own products and activities and help them to generate additional onfarm revenues.

The partnership is launching counseling services and training programs that will focus not only on small business development issues but will also employ faculty and students at Johnson and Wales University to provide research and expertise in product development, tourism and hospitality, retail management and more.

For more information contact Stu Nunnery at 401-592-0209 or ricape@cox.net

FARMERS: Apply for Free Counseling Services Now!

Download your form and send to: Douglas Jobling Director, Special Projects RI Small Business Development Center Johnson & Wales University 270 Weybosset Street, 4th Floor Providence, RI 02903 (401) 263-5124 E-Mail Doug Jobling

RISBDC Workshop and Training Schedule

The Rhode Island Small Business Development Center (RISBDC) is administered by Johnson & Wales in a partnership with the U.S. Small Business Administration. Part of a national network of SBDC's, the RISBDC provides:

- No-charge business consulting
- Low-cost business training

Specialty services to small businesses throughout the state.



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Carriage House Farm N. Scituate 401-934-3173

Upcoming Events

The Business of Farming 2009 Wednesday, March 5th, 8:30-3PM

Location: TBA Program Fee: \$10.00 RI FarmWays Members: Free

RI FarmWays starts off its 2009 training series with a special program on business. In the past year many new farm business ideas, resources and services have come into play in the region.

- Learn about free business counseling and a growing range of available business services.
- Improve your marketing communications outreach and feedback.
- Explore new insurance issues and solutions.
- Plan best strategies to expand or stabilize your farm business.
- Ratchet up existing enterprises or start new ones.
- Rethink your short term and long-term goals.
- Learn how to start measuring your success this year and every year forward.

For more information contact Stu Nunnery at 401-592-0209

Crop Insurance Deadline Monday, March 16, 2009

Rhode Island farmers are reminded that the final date to apply for crop insurance on most insurable springplanted crops for this year is March 16, 2009. Current policyholders also have until March 16 to make any changes to their existing contracts. Crop insurance provides protection against losses due to natural perils such as drought, hail, wind, and excessive moisture. The March 15 sales closing date applies to Corn, Fresh Market Sweet Corn, and Potatoes. Farmers may also want to inquire about Crop Revenue Coverage, a revenue plan that offers protection against market price declines for corn. Producers are strongly urged to contact a local crop insurance agent as soon as possible for premium quotes and more details.

For a list of crop insurance providers go to: http://www3.rma.usda.gov/tools/ agents/companies/indexCI.cfm

RI Sheep Co-op Annual Meeting Saturday, April 18, 2009

South Foster Fire Station, Foster, RI 4-H Workshop/Demos - 5:30-6:45 Potluck Dinner and Meeting to follow.

UConn Shearing School Tuesday, April 21, 2009

University of Connecticut Sheep Barn Storrs, CT Contact Randy Knight: (860) 486-2035

100th CT Wool & Fiber Festival Saturday, April 25, 2009 Tolland Agricultural Center 24 Hyde Avenue (Rte 30) Vernon, CT More info: www.ctsheep.org

The Maine-New England Galloway Group(ME-NEGG)Youth Expo Show and Sales at Fryeburg Fairgrounds April 27th-April 29th, 2009 Fryeburg, ME

The Big East Regional Youth and Jackpot Shows

April 30th to May 3rd, 2009 Combined with the New England Hereford Association Annual Sale is at Eastern States Exposition West Springfield, Ma

Annual Sheep Shearing Day May 9, 2009, 12-4pm Watson Farm, Jamestown, RI 401-423-0005 \$10 per carload

RIRLA Calendar

Annual Meeting

Wednesday, March 18, 2009 6:30 p.m. Elks Hall, West Greenwich

Steering Committee Meetings

Monday, March 30, 2009 6:30 p.m. Greggs Restaurant, N. Kingstown

Monday, April 27, 2009 6:30 p.m. Greggs Restaurant, N. Kingstown

These meetings are open to all members. Come and participate in shaping the future of our organization!

Rhode Island Raised Livestock Association P.O. Box 640, N. Scituate, RI 02857

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Editors: Chris Ulrich Jane Christopher vgeese@verizon.net

RIRLA News is published quarterly by the Rhode Island Raised Livestock Association. RIRLA's mission is "to promote the preservation of our agricultural lands, our rural economy, and our agrarian way of life by creating an organization that will secure a viable infrastructure and provide for the efficient and sustainable production, processing, and marketing of quality, value added, locally produced meats in the state of Rhode Island".

Annual membership is \$30 per RI farm, \$100 per out-of-state farm and includes the newsletter. We also accept unsolicited donations. RIRLA News welcomes articles, photographs, letters and classified advertising for possible publication. Publication of articles or advertisements is not necessarily an endorsement by RIRLA. Articles from this newsletter may not be reprinted without permission. ©RIRLA 2009

RIRLA Executive Board

Bill Coulter, President, 364-5063 Patrick McNiff, Vice President,413-9770 Will Wright, Treasurer, 392-3469 Heather Minto, Secretary 423-0005 Don Minto, Past President Ex Officio 423-0005

RIRLA Sponsorship and Advertising Information Sponsorship

Cost: \$250/issue Ad size: Full page plus special acknowledgement Distribution: Over 225 RI, MA and CT farms and farm related businesses Published: Quarterly - January, April, July, October Advertisements (Dimensions: width x height) Business card – 3-1/2" x 2" Cost: One time rate: \$25

4X rate: \$85 (4 issues) 1/4 page ad – 3-1/2" x 4-3/4"

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