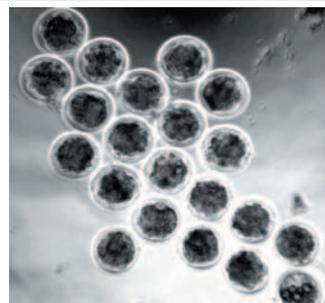




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# NEWS

Winter 2009-2010

Volume 3 Issue 4

## RI Raised Livestock Association 2010 Annual Meeting Scheduled

The Annual Meeting of the Rhode Island Raised Livestock Association will be held on Monday, March 29, 2010 at the West Greenwich Elks Lodge, Rt. 3, West Greenwich, RI. The Association has planned an evening full of information for RIRLA members and anyone else who may be interested in livestock farming in Little Rhody.

Doors will open at 6:00 p.m. with an opportunity to network with other farmers and browse the information tables of agricultural vendors and service providers including the Farm Bureau, URI Cooperative Extension, Farm Fresh RI, Farm Family Insurance and many more.

The meeting will begin at 7:00 p.m. Attendees will be able to learn more

about the Association and the benefits of membership; preview the Association's new website; get valuable information on services, programs and organizations that are available to assist farmers with marketing, business and animal husbandry; find out how to obtain permits to sell your meat; hear about upcoming educational and networking events; as well as the opportunity to tell RIRLA what you would like to see the Association offer to farmers in 2010 and beyond and last but not least: GET INVOLVED!

We encourage all current members to attend, and ask them to invite all others they know who may be interested in joining RIRLA. This is a wonderful opportunity to learn about all the benefits Association has to offer its members.

The agenda:

1. Overview of the Agricultural Partnership (supported by the Van Buren Foundation)
2. Presentation on obtaining permits to sell from the RI Department of Health
3. Resources available to RI farmers for business, marketing and animal husbandry
4. Review of 2009 and preview of 2010 including processing, pasture walks, cut workshops and more
5. Member forum
6. Election of officers

**Monday, March 29, 2010**

**Doors open at 6:00 p.m.**

**West Greenwich Elks Lodge**

**42 Nooseneck Hill Road (Rt. 3)**

**West Greenwich, RI**

## “Gourmet Beef On Grass”

*by Don Minto, Watson Farm*

The Annual Meeting of the North American Devon Association “Gourmet Beef on Grass” was held in October at two ranches in the surrounding area of Austin Texas. As breeders of Red Devon Cattle at the Watson Farm in Jamestown we took the opportunity to attend this Conference and Sale to further our knowledge. It was a great opportunity to meet and network with the 150 breeders from all across America who attended the gathering, and to hear what the panel of excellent presenters had to offer.

For this article I will highlight the major gems that we took home with

us regarding practices that farmers and ranchers from that area are utilizing to make their livestock operations more sustainable. At the Watson Farm we produce 100% grass fed and finished beef and lamb and we are direct marketers. We have implemented over the years, to some degree, some of the following practices outlined here and will most likely fine tune them and put them to further use on our livestock operation.

The goal, for all of us, is to find ways that our farms, our land, forages, and livestock provide us with a satisfying life. This can mean different things to different folks. For my family's goals, in a

nutshell, this means producing healthy food that provides a living. The crux of sustainability is based on the premise that it must make economic sense, provide environmental enhancement, it must become more energy efficient, and as farmers... enjoyment must be a factor! Some of the following conference presenters can help us achieve this goal. I will put links to several sites at the end of this article or you can Google them to get a lot more info.

Gearld Fry from Arkansas did a chute side demonstration on linear measurement. Linear measurement is a

*continued on page 8*

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# A Report from the Director of RIRLA, Kim Ziegelmayr



**G**reetings once again to all RI Raised Livestock Association members and all the other folks that have an interest in the work of RIRLA. We are now edging closer to spring, with the days getting longer and the temperatures not quite so frigid; I hope you all have had a chance to enjoy the down time that winter affords.

First things first! It is that time of year again, time to Join or Renew your RI Raised Livestock Association membership. You will find the new membership form in this newsletter. You will notice the new form has a detailed survey. While I know that many people dislike surveys there are a couple of things to keep in mind: 1) your privacy is guaranteed - your information will be kept completely anonymous; 2) the statistic RIRLA can draw from this information provides support for RIRLA as it applies for grants to help keep the Association going.

This year – 2010 – is going to be a great year for RIRLA and its members; with more benefits and services to our membership! In addition to the USDA-inspected Processing Scheduling Service we have: grain discounts on Poulin grain, a new website, pasture walks and meat cut workshops, technical assistance with RI sales permits, a quarterly newsletter, improved access to veterinary services, networking events and more. Though basic membership has increased \$10 to \$40 it is still a GREAT deal when you add up all that you get!

The second big piece of news is the 2010 Annual Meeting coming up on Monday, March 29. Just like last year this meeting is happening at the West Greenwich Elks. This year we've added something new, information tables for agricultural businesses and service providers. The doors open at 6:00 p.m. with an hour to browse the tables and network with other farmers. For more details see the article on Page 1.

The Processing Scheduling Service continues to move forward at a rapid pace. Last year, 2009, saw DOUBLE the number of animals processed in 2008. (See Calendar, pg. 15 for available dates). The 2009 Review and 2010 Planning meeting with Westerly Packing was very productive and covered a lot of exciting ground. Westerly Packing is on track to expand its processing capacity including near-term equipment and facility upgrades and mid-term plans to build a new processing building. RIRLA and Westerly Packing will also work to bring an industry consultant in to evaluate RIRLA's Processing Scheduling Service and Westerly's operation. We will continue to work together to improve customer service and satisfaction. RIRLA would like to thank Westerly Packing for sponsoring this issue of the newsletter.

Westerly Packing also has two pieces of news of its own to share with RIRLA members. The first news is new, USDA-approved sausage products available to RIRLA members including chicken, goat, veal, beef and lamb sausage as well as fresh kielbasa. The second news is the new E. coli test required by USDA. Due to recent food safety scares and E.coli tainted meat recalls USDA now requires Westerly Packing to test all ground beef for E. coli. The result is an increase of \$0.10/lb. on ground beef.

Back to RIRLA news and member benefits! RIRLA and Westerly Packing held its first in a series of Meat Cut workshops – the Beef workshop held Thursday, February 25. The date for the Pork & Lamb workshop will be announced at the annual meeting. A

tour of RI Beef & Veal and Westerly Packing, finishing up with a late lunch of local food, is scheduled for April 10. Call Kim at 401-575-3348 or [director-rirla@cox.net](mailto:director-rirla@cox.net) to reserve a space.

RIRLA also has several Pasture Walks planned including a multi-species grazing and mobile poultry processing; working with Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS); and production and marketing. RIRLA is also collaborating with the RI Veterinary Medical Association to coordinate herd health visits to farms in RI that lack access to veterinary care; as well as working with Farm Fresh RI to pilot a program that will coordinate fresh meat to local restaurants.

In addition, RIRLA will be debuting a new program for 2010 – Consumer Members. There are multiple benefits to farmer members in this program. Most importantly, as consumers begin to identify the RIRLA logo and brand as a trusted source of local and humanely-raised, hormone and antibiotic free meat this will increase the demand for farm members' meat and consumer support of local agriculture. Also, consumer member dues will bring an additional revenue stream to the Association, strengthening RIRLA's long-term financial sustainability. Last but not least the RIRLA website [www.rirla.com](http://www.rirla.com) will be introduced at the Annual Meeting. This will be an enormous benefit to the Association, offer RIRLA members many resources and be a location for the general public to learn about RIRLA and what it has to offer farmers and consumers, as well as serve as a marketing presence for RIRLA and its three programs.

Well, that is about it for now. I would like to extend a huge thank you, once again, to all of the dedicated volunteers who make this the great organization. Please don't hesitate to contact me at 401-575-3348 or [director-rirla@cox.net](mailto:director-rirla@cox.net) to schedule your animals, discuss an idea or voice any concerns you may have.

# RIRLA Holds First Beef Cut Workshop

The RI Raised Livestock Association, in partnership with Westerly Packing, held its first *Meat Cut Workshop – Beef* on Thursday, February 25<sup>th</sup> at Westerly Packing’s facility in Westerly, RI. Nineteen people attended the event, including RIRLA members and other interested individuals, including a supplier to the new Ocean House in Westerly and Sean Conway, the program host of the PBS show “*Cultivating Life.*” The workshop gathered rave reviews from the participants.

The workshop began in the cooler, with a review and discussion of a half side of beef including primal and cuts. The group then moved to the cutting room where master cutter Medoro Trombino, head cutter Javier Santiago and assistant cutter Jacob methodically cut the half-side into all its component pieces while all the while explaining different facts about the cuts as well as problems and decisions they often face when cutting.

Stay tuned for the next Meat Cut Workshop on Pork and Lamb coming in

the spring. Call or email Kim 401-5757-3348 or [director-rirla@cox.net](mailto:director-rirla@cox.net) for more details or to reserve your space in the upcoming Processing Tour on April 10. We will tour Westerly Packing and RI Beef & Veal and then finish with a late lunch of local fare, including local meat.



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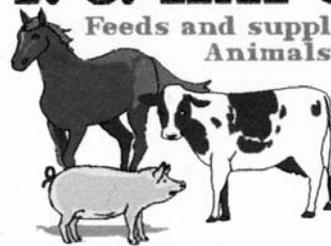
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# Morracco changes the menu after 25 years in Cranston schools

by Carol Ann Donnelly

Cranston Schools Food Service Director Mike Morracco has set a lot of firsts in his career, but with his retirement set for the end of this year, adding another under his belt tastes pretty sweet.

Thanks to his leadership, the students at Cranston High School West were treated to Rhode Island-raised beef for the first time as part of the district's efforts to buy local for school lunches.

The beef, which came from Watson Farm in Jamestown, was used to prepare shepherd's pie. Samples of the dish were passed out to students during lunch, along with samples of apple crisp, apple cider and apple pie shakes, all made with locally grown apples.

"It's a good idea to promote local farms," said senior Dana Demers.

At first the students were hesitant to try the samples, but those who did try, gave positive remarks for taste. The emphasis across the board was supporting the local agriculture community.

"A growing number of young people are interested in supporting local food," said Karin Wetherill of Kids First.

RI DEM/Division of Agriculture Chief Ken Ayars and school committee member Steve Stycos were on hand for the event, as well as Vinnie Confreda from Confreda Farms. Confreda Farms is one of 12 local farms that are involved in the farm-to-school program, and donates corn on the cob to the Cranston schools twice a year.

Morracco began the farm-to-school program several years ago, and other school districts across the state have adopted the program for their meal plans.

As a result of the program, for the first time this year, farmers planted in anticipation of selling their



*GRABBING A BITE: Mike Morracco, Vinnie Confreda and Karin Wetherill enjoy a locally grown meal at Cranston West.*

crops to schools. In addition, farmers are managing their orchards differently to grow smaller apples for younger children.

"The schools tell the farmers how much to grow for guaranteed sale," Wetherill said.

Vinnie Confreda says the local farming community owes a lot to Morracco for the program success.

"Mike's a great guy," Confreda said. "He really has promoted the program."

Morracco, who is a Cranston native, said he always knew he wanted to be a chef. He began his cooking career while he was still in high school with an after-school job at Arby's. A chef at the restaurant took Morracco under his wing and taught him how to make sauces and to sauté.

After graduating from Cranston High School East in 1970, Morracco joined the Navy and attended their cooking school, but he never got a chance to cook while he was enlisted. He spent eight months in Cuba training Marines in hand-to-hand combat before spending a year in Vietnam on the U.S.S. Saratoga.

When he returned home from military duty, Morracco enrolled at Johnson and Wales, and graduated from the first culinary class offered by the school in 1975. During his education, he worked as a cook at Camille's Roman Garden, and after graduation the Providence Holiday

Inn hired him as their executive chef.

From there, he became executive chef for Capriccio's, before moving on to Allendale Insurance as an assistant manager of their cafeteria. He left Allendale to become the executive chef of the Blue Grotto, but he liked the management aspect of running a kitchen, so Morracco made the move to become the Food Service director of the Cranston Schools.

That was almost 25 years ago, and there have been many changes since he first stepped into his role.

"When I first came here, we had one lunch choice, now there are 30 choices on the line," he said.

Stycos said they are not sure if they are going to hire another food service director or if they are going to go with a food service company, but Morracco said he would assist in finding a replacement. He has no definite plans for retirement, except he did say he plans to spend time with his wife.

Morracco gave high praise to his workers and said he will miss his staff.

"It has been a great career," he said. "I've loved the job, and if I had to do it all over again, I would."

*Reprinted with permission from the Cranston Herald*

## ANNUAL VISITORS DAY SVF FOUNDATION

152 Harrison Avenue, Newport RI 02840  
Saturday, June 12, 2010  
9:30 to 3:00

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For more information contact the main office at 401-848-7229 or e-mail [info@svffoundation.org](mailto:info@svffoundation.org), and check out the website: [www.svffoundation.org](http://www.svffoundation.org).

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# New test may help address costly parasite in sheep industry

Researchers at Oregon State University and the University of Georgia have developed an improved, more efficient method to test for the most serious of the parasitic worms in sheep, a problem that causes hundreds of millions of dollars in losses every year to the global sheep and wool industry.

This technology is now available, and will allow a faster, easier and less expensive way to test for the presence and quantity of *Haemonchus contortus*, or “barber pole” worms, a species that is very pathogenic to sheep, goats and llamas. This will help sheep ranchers deal with this problem more quickly and effectively, optimize their management practices, and sometimes avoid costly therapies.

Findings about the new test were just published in *Veterinary Parasitology*, a professional journal.

“This particular parasite is much more pathogenic in sheep than other worms, and previous methods to detect it were very labor intensive and often not commercially practical,” said Michael Kent, an OSU professor of microbiology. “Now ranchers and veterinarians can test for this problem and target their management or treatment strategies much more effectively.”

This parasite causes significant production losses, and in some cases it’s the limiting factor to sheep production on pasture lands. The nematodes can cause internal bleeding, which in turn can lead to anemia, poor food conversion and growth, low protein levels, reduced lamb production and wool yield, and in some cases death.

Known as the barber pole or wire worm, *Haemonchus contortus* is a blood-sucking parasite that pierces the lining of the sheep’s stomach. It’s a prolific egg producer, releasing up to 10,000 eggs per day, and often causes problems in warmer climates or during the summer. Once an infection is demonstrated, expensive treatments or complex management strategies are often needed

to address it.

The new lectin staining test is based on a peanut agglutinin that binds to eggs of the parasite and can be easily visualized with a microscope using ultraviolet light. It’s an improved version of previous technology developed by scientists in Australia that was slower, less effective, more expensive and required more advanced training to perform, researchers say.

The relatively inexpensive test was developed by microbiologists and veterinary doctors at OSU and UGA, and is now available through those institutions. Its use should continue to expand and become more readily available around the world, Kent said.

The test may also be of special value to ranchers interested in organic production of sheep, goats and llamas, who try to avoid use of chemical treatments in maintaining the health of their animals.

“One of the current testing tools commonly used by sheep and goat farmers in dealing with *H. contortus* is the FAMACHA method, in which the farmer compares the animal’s lower eyelid color to swatches on a card to determine the animal’s anemia status,” said Bob Storey, a UGA researcher who co-developed the lectin staining test. “This method only works in situations where *H. contortus* is the primary parasite in a given herd’s worm population. The new lectin staining test allows for a faster and less expensive method of determining the predominance of *H. contortus* in a herd worm population, thereby making it easier for producers to determine if FAMACHA can be a useful tool for them. Additionally, for the veterinarian dealing with an anemic animal and a heavy parasite burden, the lectin staining test provides quick feedback as to whether the anemia is parasite-based or may be

due to another cause.”

The test requires only a small amount of feces, and results are available in as little as two days. Anyone interested in obtaining the test can get information on sampling, test results and fees from the Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory at OSU <http://oregonstate.edu/vetmed/diagnostic> or 541-752-5501, or Bob Storey (Dept. of Infectious Diseases, College of Veterinary Medicine, University of Georgia, Athens, Ga., 30602 or 706-542-0195). FAMACHA information can be obtained through Bob Storey or by sending an email to [famacha@uga.edu](mailto:famacha@uga.edu). As with any animal health concerns, results should be reviewed with a



*This parasitic worm that infects sheep Haemonchus Contortus, is pictured along with its eggs.*

veterinarian so that proper treatment programs can be put in place, researchers said.

Contact: Sam Fahmy  
[sfahmy@uga.edu](mailto:sfahmy@uga.edu)  
706-542-5361  
University of Georgia

*Reprinted with permission.*

**A**s we all know, these are very tough economic times in general, and RI seems to be in a worse situation than most. The General Assembly and the Governor are facing a lot of tough decisions as they work to put together the budget for the state. A lot of departments are facing level funding as the best case scenario and deep cuts or elimination as the worst case scenario.

The RI Raised Livestock Association is calling its members to action on behalf of the Division of Agriculture! As most of you know, Ken Ayars, Chief of the Division, and Dr. Scott Marshall, State Veterinarian, have been VERY strong supporters of RIRLA. Ken and Scott worked long and hard with the RI Department of Health to develop a more streamlined process for farmers to get their permits to sell. This in turn has made it easier for farmers to get their products to consumers. Also, Dr. Marshall has recently brought together a working group of farmers, veterinarians and others to help address the shortage of large animal veterinary services in the state.

It's our turn now to support Ken, Scott and the rest of the crew at the RI Division of Agriculture. Please call or write your local senators and representatives and ask them to support the RI Division of Agriculture in the budgeting process. Do not underestimate the impact your phone calls, faxes, letters and emails can have. Elected officials want to hear from their constituents and WELCOME the information that you can provide them on this subject.

Don't know who your reps or senator are, go to [www.sos.ri.gov/vic](http://www.sos.ri.gov/vic) and fill in the information for the "View General Voter Information." On the page that comes up scroll down to "State and Federal Elected Officials"; at the bottom of the list appears the name of the rep and senator who represent you and your district in the RI General Assembly. Click on the name and you will be brought to a page that provides mail and phone contact information for that individual. If you don't have access to the internet please feel free to call Kim at

401-575-3348 and she will assist you in obtaining that information.

### Here are some pointers:

When you contact your member of the General Assembly, be as specific as possible. Keep it brief and use your own words. Identify your subject clearly, in this case budgetary support for the RI Division of Agriculture. Specify the topic, in this case the RI state budget, that you are concerned about. Be reasonable; and ask your legislators to state their positions on the issue – you have a right to know. Some "talking points" to consider including in your message:

Agriculture is about the only growth industry in the state right now.

- The 2007 Agricultural Census shows that the number of farms in RI increased 42% since 2002, as has the amount of land in farms.
- RI ranks third in the nation in direct market sales on a per farm basis
- Providence County is ranked 50<sup>th</sup> among all U.S. counties for direct marketing sales

The RI Division of Agriculture has been instrumental in supporting agriculture around the state and has directly assisted the RI Raised Livestock Association and its members by:

- Collaborating with RIRLA and the RI Department of Health to create a technical assistance package which greatly streamlines the process for farmers to obtain permits to sell their meat
- Working with RIRLA, the RI Veterinary Medical Association and other to address the shortage of large animal vets and services in Rhode Island
- Making sure that the concerns of livestock and other farmers are heard in discussions of legislative and policy issues that affect agriculture
- Partnering with the RI Rural Development Council to promote the "Be Fresh, Buy Local" campaign

which educates the public about the nutritional, economic, environmental and community benefits of purchasing local meats, as well as fruits and vegetables, dairy products etc.

Supporting the Division of Agriculture translates into many benefits for the state overall:

- Supporting and assisting local farms and sustainable food production in and around the state of RI; making agriculture more economically viable and sustainable
- Strengthening the local agricultural infrastructure, critical to making local foods accessible to the community and reducing the carbon footprint of the food we eat
- Increasing local farm production and business capacity that puts more land in farms, keeps open space open and preserves Rhode Island's rural culture and history
- Continuing community access to nutritious, healthy, local, sustainably grown meat and meat products
- The RI Raised Livestock Association, with the support of the RI Division of Agriculture, added over \$300,000 to RI's economy in 2008 and nearly \$700,000 in 2009

So please consider writing an email or letter, or making a phone call. If you are really the outgoing type consider making an appointment with your representative and/or senator to discuss these points with them in person. Thanks in advance for any effort you are able to make to support the RI Division of Agriculture.

## “Gourmet Beef On Grass”

*continued from page 1*

working tool used to select animals that have the correct phenotype to perform well on grass. Gearld has developed this system and he is able to choose the best animals from a herd to focus on expanding proper genetics for finishing on grass. It is also a tool for deciding which ones to cull.

Dr. Will Winter was on hand and we spent quite a bit of time with him discussing minerals for optimum herd, (and human) health. The fact is that most of our land has become depleted of trace minerals, and our soil health and biology have been all but destroyed. Paying attention to the proper minerals for your livestock can prevent pinkeye, hoof rot, ringworm and a slew of other problems. They can strengthen the immune system, and provide food that is so much more nutrient dense and good for you. You are what you eat!

Cody Holmes, a rancher, gave a great presentation on Holistic Resource Management as a working tool for a decision making process for your farm, business, and your life. Cody manages a large ranch, produces cattle, and utilizes tall grass grazing and mobstocking. He is not a direct marketer but focuses on total pounds of beef produced per acre. He only works two hours per day on the

average. Talk about quality of life!

Sabino Cortez - This presentation, for me, was indeed the highlight of the Conference. Sabino is a proponent of utilizing compost tea as an on-farm basis of fertility management. In fact, at the Stevens Ranch, this was the only source of providing fertility for their large grazing operation. He has developed a system for aerating or oxygenating water and utilizing as little as 2 and 1/2 pounds of compost per acre applied in a foliar application to the land. He has developed digestors at the ranch which make up to 10,000 gallons of compost tea and it is delivered to the land through their irrigation system. The Stevens Ranch has been developing this system and this past year, in a severe drought, all the ranches who were irrigating in the area were brown and burnt. Flying over the area, the Stevens Ranch was an emerald stretch of healthy forage and fat cattle that stood out. The neighbor ranches are beginning to take notice.

On the ground, the place was alive with biology. Open soils that a pentrometer would push gently down to the hilt. Everywhere you walked through the pastures. observing the fat cattle, there were dung beetles working to bury the manure into tunnels. I counted at least 10 different species of dung beetles. There were hardly any flies. They have not used any worm medicine. Fire ants,

which are like armies down there, cause huge destruction to the soil and the forage. Where no compost was applied the fire ants were having at it. Where it was applied it appeared that there was an invisible fence that the fire ants didn't dare pass over.

I have to say I was intrigued by the possibilities and want to learn more about how we might incorporate more of this at our farm.

To learn more about what I have touched upon check out the following links:

North American Devon  
[www.northamericandevon.com](http://www.northamericandevon.com)

Gearld Fry  
[www.bovineengineering.com](http://www.bovineengineering.com)

Dr. Will Winter-Holistic Vet Thousand Hills Cattle Company  
[www.thousandhillcattleco.com](http://www.thousandhillcattleco.com)

Cody Holmes-Holistic Planned Grazing-Rockin H Cattle Company-(Google-no website)

Sabino Cortez  
Compost Tea - [erathearth.com](http://erathearth.com)

\*Thanks to Kristen Castrataro URI Rhode Island Cooperative Extension TriState Program for partial funding to attend this conference.





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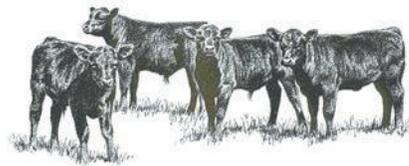


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# In case you wondered...

We were wondering if gamagrass would grow in our area. We sent an email inquiry to Bruce Zoeller from the Gamgrass Seed Company. Here is his response:

"I don't know if we have sold any gamagrass in RI, however we have sold seed to upstate NY as well as in northern MN and MI. The reason you would want to use gamagrass in a grazing rotation is if your cool-season grasses are going dormant because of the heat stress in the summer months (June, July and August). If not, stick with what you have. If they are going dormant start out by trying a small acreage on your wet or flood prone sites.

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Bruce Zoeller  
Gamagrass Seed Company

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### John T. Howard Agency

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# Johne's Disease – Beef

While some seedstock producers argue that testing for Johne's disease is an outward sign that you are concerned that your herd might be infected with *Mycobacterium avium* subspecies *paratuberculosis*. Dave Judd of Judd Ranch, Pomona, Kan., sees things differently. This Kansas purebred breeder argues that testing for Johne's disease is a proactive step that every seedstock producer should undertake.

Dave says testing for Johne's disease and knowing no positive animals have been found lets him sleep better at night.

"Although we had not seen any cases of Johne's disease in the herd, I want to be confident that Johne's disease is not unknowingly present in our herd and might result in infecting the herds of our customers when they purchase a Judd Ranch bull or female," Dave explains.

Dave, who owns Judd Ranch in partnership with his wife Cindy and sons Nick and Brent, adds that Judd Ranch sells 200-plus Gelbvieh, Red Angus and Balancer bulls every March and 100-plus females every October. With those sales comes responsibilities.

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**"Ignorance is not bliss when it comes to Johne's disease."**

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"Your reputation is on the line with every bull or female sold to fellow seedstock producers and commercial cow-calf operators," Dave elaborates. "It just makes sense to participate in a Johne's disease prevention, control and testing program."

Judd Ranch initiated testing for Johne's disease five years ago. The initial testing was recommended by their herd health consulting team out of Kansas State University, with the testing cost partially funded by USDA/ APHIS/VIS.

Since then, government assistance for testing has ceased. Now the cost of testing is underwritten in full by Judd Ranch and deemed a smart investment.

"Ignorance is not bliss when it comes to Johne's disease," Dave states. "It's a responsibility of seedstock producers such as ourselves to know the prevalence or non-prevalence of Johne's disease in our herds. I would compare this knowledge and confidence level equal to being a certified brucellois-free herd or a PI-free herd."

Judd Ranch turned to a veterinarian from Kansas State University to handle



its initial Johne's disease testing. All cattle three years of age and older were blood tested, with samples submitted to the Kansas State University Diagnostic Lab (an approved Johne's disease testing facility) The result: No positive animals were found.

Annual Johne's testing has continued at Judd Ranch since that first testing five years ago. "Judd Ranch is definitely proactive when it comes to herd health," states Dr. Larry Mages who handles the ranch's day-to-day herd health. "I wish every beef seedstock herd in the country would be this proactive. If you're selling seedstock or bulls to commercial cattlemen, then you owe it to your customers to test for Johne's disease and be comfortable that you're not unknowingly introducing Johne's disease into their herds."

## Attention to Recips

Johne's disease testing proponents stress that it's important that seedstock producers using embryo transfer programs test recipient females. After all, *Mycobacterium avium* subspecies *paratuberculosis* can be passed in utero.

"We use Judd Ranch-raised females as recips so that isn't a problem here," Dave adds. "But, if we ever ran out of recips and had to buy recips, they would be tested straight way before they are used in the ET program. That's just a smart biosecurity measure."

## Vaccine Project Underway

With only one USDA-approved vaccine available to help protect against

Johne's disease, many veterinarians and producers would like more available vaccines— particularly since the current approved vaccine has limitations and is not approved for use in all states. With funding from USDA-APHIS-VIS, the Johne's Disease Integrated Program has undertaken an effort to identify viable vaccine candidates and evaluate those with the greatest potential for commercial development.

"The project is in the initial stages of a three-step process," states Tiffany Cunningham with JDIP. "Currently, JDIP is in Phase I of the vaccine-testing program and has added an additional participating institution, AgResearch Limited, to the program."

As part of Phase I of the program, scientists have submitted strains of live vaccine candidates and recombinant proteins, and a laboratory at The Pennsylvania State University is coordinating the collection and growing the strains that have been received. The strains will then be distributed to candidate vaccine-testing centers at the University of Wis-

*continued on page 13*

## Johne's Disease - Beef

*continued from page 12*

consin and the University of Minnesota for blinded evaluation.

"The JDIP Epidemiology and Biostatistics Core at Cornell University will analyze the results of the testing in a blinded manner and identify the 'best candidates'," Cunningham states. "Once the analysis is complete and the blind key is opened, all of the program participants will receive the data at the same time." During Phase II of the vaccine-testing program, "best candidates" will be evaluated using a mouse model. If all goes as planned, two laboratories will conduct the infection and protection studies in the mouse.

The "best candidates" identified through the mouse studies will be evaluated using a goat model in Phase III.

"This will provide data similar to that from cattle, but the data will be available in a much shorter time frame and at a lower cost," states Robab Katani, a JDIP scientist with The Pennsylvania State University.

"The coordinated three-stage evaluation will take approximately three years to complete. It is expected that this rigorous screening process will identify one or more viable candidates to move forward for commercial development."

Commercial cow-calf producers and seedstock producers can lessen the chance of introducing Johne's disease into their herds by purchasing bulls and/or females only from Johne's tested herds. The bulls used on these females come from a Johne's tested herd.

Scott Marshall is your designated Johne's Coordinator.

zContact Scott at:  
scott.marshall@dem.ri.gov  
Phone (401) 222-2781, Ext. 4  
or visit [www.johnesdisease.org](http://www.johnesdisease.org)

*Submitted by Scott Marshall, DVM, and reprinted with permission from the National Johne's Education Initiative*

# Rhode Island Sheep Cooperative News

Rhode Island Sheep Cooperative extends an invitation to all to their Annual Pot Luck Dinner and Annual Meeting, to be held Saturday, March 27, 2010 at the Laurel Grange located at the corner of Snake Hill Road and Saw Mill Road in Harmony, Rhode Island. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. with dinner to be served at 6:00 p.m. Following the Annual Meeting, the guest speakers for the evening will be RIRLA's Executive Director, Kim Ziegelmayr explaining all the activities of RIRLA to the Cooperative, and Kristen Castrataro, URI Agricultural Extension Agent responsible for providing technical support to RI's commercial fruit, vegetable, and livestock producers, explaining their current project among others, "The Bobolink Project". Bring a (large) dish to share (drinks and dessert are provided) and an item for the silent auction (funds raised for youth activities), and enjoy an evening with old friends and meet new ones!

The RI Sheep Co-op still has lap and long throws available in two designs. For more information go to [www.risheep.org](http://www.risheep.org) and click on "Rhody Warm Blankets" to order from the Cooperative or to find a sheep farmer near to you to purchase a blanket. Plans are in the works for Wool Collection Day, tentatively set for the first Saturday in June. Contact your shearer now to schedule an appointment to get your sheep sheared. Then attend one of the events listed below to learn to skirt your fleece. Join the Cooperative and get your own Rhody Warm Blanket by contributing your fleeces. Contact a RI Sheep Co-op Board member with any questions.

**The 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Rhode Island Wool & Fiber Festival** will be held Saturday May 15, 2010 from 9:00 to 4:00 at the Coggeshall Farm Museum, in Bristol, Rhode Island. Come see sheep shearing done by hand, make crafts in the Kid's Tent, watch a Fleece to Shawl contest, skirting of wool demonstrations and other interesting demonstrations by local Guilds, see fiber animals, learn about

Rhody Warm Blankets, and browse the many, many vendors with wool and fiber related items for sale. And of course, tour the Museums' 18th Century Farmhouse to see hearth cooking, weaving, spinning and dyeing. For more information go to [www.coggeshallfarm.org](http://www.coggeshallfarm.org).

**Rabies Clinics Scheduled:** The Rhode Island Veterinary Medical Association announces two Large Animal Rabies Clinics for cattle, sheep and goats (sorry, no horses).

Dates and times are as follows:

April 17, 2010 from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. at Washington County Fairgrounds

April 24, 2010 from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 a.m. at Foster Fairgrounds  
\$10 per vaccination

**Rules of Clinic:**

- Doctor/volunteer/technicians have the right to refuse to vaccinate animals who are determined to be unruly.
- Fee is payable by CASH ONLY.
- No appointment is necessary.
- If your animal(s) is not properly identified (official ear tag, microchip, registration tattoo) a means of official identification will be applied so that you will have proof of vaccination. For bio-security and safety reasons we will attempt to vaccinate all animals without off-loading them.
- We will not vaccinate any animals that did not originate in RI unless those animals meet state importation requirements for identification, testing, and are accompanied by a valid certificate of veterinary examination.

Please pass this information along to anyone that you think might be interested.

A reminder that eligible species three (3) months of age and older must be vaccinated for show and exhibition, at least thirty (30) days prior to show.

## Opportunities

### **\$1.3 million available RI Farm Service Agency (FSA) County Office**

The RI Farm Service Agency has \$1,393,000 available to lend beginning farmers to purchase a farm or to make improvements to an existing farm. Call 1-800-551-5144 or 401-828-3120 for more information.

### **FFA Judges**

Throughout the year, the FFA program offers several contests and events for students to compete in. These events are judged and scored by teachers, community members and business professionals.

Below are the dates of the contests as well as the time and location of each event. If you are interested in judging one of our contests or a proficiency project, please fill out the form below and return it to the following:

Allison Toles  
Rhode Island FFA State Advisor  
75 Borden Ave  
Johnston, RI 02919  
[atoles@flgcorp.com](mailto:atoles@flgcorp.com)  
Phone: (401)219-6388  
Office: (401)854-8300 ext: 246

### **Demonstration and Illustrated Talk-**

Wednesday March 31st  
Location: Exeter-West Greenwich High School  
Number of Judges Needed: 8

### **State Convention - Thursday April 29th**

Location: Exeter Chapel, Rt. 102  
Exeter, RI  
Contests: Prepared Public Speaking (3 Judges)  
Opening and Closing Ceremonies (3 Judges)  
Extemporaneous Speaking (3 Judges)

### **Proficiency Project Judging- TBD (Early March)**

### **Cornell Small Farms Program seeking Extension Associate**

To view the description online, visit <http://www.hr.cornell.edu/jobs>. Then,

click on: External Applicants > Faculty and Non-Faculty Instruction, Research & Extension Positions > Job Number 11761-Extension Associate.

Applicants should send a CV, and have three letters of reference sent to: Cornell University, Dr. Anusuya Rangarajan, Department of Horticulture, 121 Plant Science Building, Ithaca, NY 14853-7801 USA

Email applications should be sent to [ar47@cornell.edu](mailto:ar47@cornell.edu). Review of applications will begin Jan 18 and will continue until the position has been filled.

### **Farm Viability grant funds March 31 DEADLINE**

The RIDEM/Division of Agriculture is pleased to announce the availability of \$150,000 in Farm Viability grant funds for the purpose of enhancing the Competitiveness of Specialty Crops grown in Rhode Island. Examples include research, promotion, marketing, nutrition, food safety and security, plant health, "buy local" programs, environmental concerns and conservation and product development. Go to [www.rigrown.ri.gov](http://www.rigrown.ri.gov), Farmers Section, Grants and Loans for the application. Call Peter Susi 401-222-2781 ext. 4517 or [peter.susi@dem.ri.gov](mailto:peter.susi@dem.ri.gov) for more information.

### **Rabies Vaccinations**

Dr. Barbara Korry is available to provide rabies vaccinations for livestock. Appointments will be available on Monday and Tuesday mornings and Saturday afternoons, please call 401-732-4050 to schedule. Rabies certificates will be provided. Please note that if you are planning to show your animals the rabies vaccination must be administered at least 30 days before the show unless it is a booster.

Please confirm the date and the number of people who will be attending the training session. Should you have any questions, please contact Gurpreet Kaur at 222-4637 or 222-4633.

## Events

### **March 17, Wednesday Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) Certification Program & Integrated Pest Management (IPM) for the Farm Stand**

**URI East Farm, Building 75,  
Kingston, RI  
9:00 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.**

The first hour of the training will be a presentation by Peggy Siligato discussing Integrated Pest Management for the Farm Stand. One hour of PAT credits will be awarded. The second part of the training will focus on the voluntary RI Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) Certification program. Call Martha Patoad at 401-874-2960 or [mpatoad@uri.edu](mailto:mpatoad@uri.edu) for more information and the registration form. Farmers, etc. should also be aware of the proposed federal regulations relating to food safety found at <http://image.exct.netlibfed415707767067e/m/1/Sue+Challis+Email2.pdf>

### **March 27, Saturday One-Day Farm Conference & Resource Fair – South East Massachusetts Agricultural Partnership (SEMAP) Bristol County Agricultural High School 135 Center St., Dighton, MA 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.**

Please join SEMAP for an opportunity to enhance your farm's future. Workshops include soil, nutrition, biochar, and land transfer, as well as browse the resource fair and grant room. Contact Katie Cavanaugh at 774-240-7004 for more information.

### **March 27, Saturday The Hows & Whys of Selling at a Farmers Market – Farm Fresh RI Hope Artiste Village 1005 Main St. Suite 1220 Pawtucket, RI 12:00 p.m.**

Join RI Rural Development Council and Farm Fresh RI for a presentation and tour at the Winter Time Farmers Market Tour at the Hope Artiste Village in Pawtucket. Enrollment limited. Additional sessions will be added if needed. Call 401-312-4250 or email [Jenn@farmfreshri.org](mailto:Jenn@farmfreshri.org) for more information and to reserve a seat. Funded by the USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program

April 12-13, Monday - Tuesday  
Northeast Rural Summit – USDA  
Partners for Rural America  
Hilton Hotel  
60 Battery St.  
Burlington, VT 05401

“Generating Rural Innovation and Regional Partnership” the Summit is designed to share best regional and place-based practices and build strategic partnerships among state Rural Development offices and rural leadership organizations throughout the region. Tracks are: Food Systems, Energy, Broadband and Rural Economic Development. For more information call 802-223-6091 or [info@vtrural.org](mailto:info@vtrural.org). To register go to <https://guest.cvent.com/EVENTS/Register/IdentityConfirmation.aspx?i=e5de991f-cadd-4594-83c9-d12097085e61>.

May 13, Thursday  
RI Agricultural Day –  
RI Division of Agriculture  
State House, Providence, RI  
10:00-11:30 a.m.

Agriculture Day 2010 is Thursday May 13. Mark your calendars! Come and educate your elected representatives on the benefits of RI's agricultural sector. For more information contact, Ron Newman at 401-222-2781 x4518 or [ron.newman@dem.ri.gov](mailto:ron.newman@dem.ri.gov).

## RIRLA Calendar

March 15: Board Meeting  
Gregg's North Kingstown, 6:30 pm

March 29: Annual Meeting  
Elk's Lodge, Rt. 3, West Greenwich.  
Doors open at 6:00 p.m

April 10, Saturday  
Tour of RI Beef & Veal and  
Westerly Packing

Join RIRLA on a tour of RI Beef & Veal and Westerly Packing, the two businesses that make up RIRLA's USDA inspected Processing Scheduling Service. Finish up the tour with a late lunch of local food at Chez Pascal in Providence. Reserve your space, participation is limited. Contact Kim for more details

April 26: Board Meeting  
Gregg's North Kingstown, 6:30 pm

## Processing Schedule

Contact Kim to schedule animals,  
401-575-3345 or  
[director-rirla@cox.net](mailto:director-rirla@cox.net)

March 23, Tuesday  
March 30, Tuesday  
April 13, Tuesday  
April 20, Tuesday

## RIRLA Web Site Photos Requested

RIRLA is very close to having its website go live! We are looking for pictures that show the “who,” the “what,” and the “how” of RI livestock farmers. This is a chance to get some free publicity for your farm. If you have some pictures that you are willing to share please forward them to Jane Christopher at [vgeese@verizon.net](mailto:vgeese@verizon.net) or Kim at [director-rirla@cox.net](mailto:director-rirla@cox.net).



## Classified

### Trailer Wanted

Local farmer looking to borrow or rent a stock trailer to accommodate 50-75 feeder pigs being purchased in PA. Needed for a couple of trips in Spring and/or early summer.

Please respond to Scott Marshall, DVM, 401-222-2781, Ext. 4, [scott.marshall@dem.ri.gov](mailto:scott.marshall@dem.ri.gov)

Rhode Island Raised Livestock  
Association  
P.O. Box 640, N. Scituate, RI 02857  
[director-rirla@cox.net](mailto:director-rirla@cox.net)

Editors: Chris Ulrich  
Jane Christopher  
[vgeese@verizon.net](mailto: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

Patrick McNiff, President, 413-9770  
Louis Vinagro, Vice President, 300-1051  
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)

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4X rate: \$250 (4 issues)

**Classifieds:** 25¢/word