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## Color-changing tomato plant alerts when soil nitrogen levels are low

By Hayley Lalchand  
Ohio Correspondent

ITHACA, N.Y. – Bioengineered tomato plants can now alert farmers to low soil nitrogen levels with leaves that turn a vivid red, thanks to multidisciplinary collaboration between Cornell University researchers. The invention, dubbed RedAlert Living Sensors, was created by doctoral students Jacob Belding and Ava Forystek and developed through the National Science Foundation’s Center for Research on Programmable Plant Systems.

While the exact mechanism of the invention cannot be revealed because the researchers are in the process of filing for intellectual property protections, Belding provided a high-level explanation of how the Living Sensors work.

“Plants natively have hormone signaling systems to coordinate their needs for different nutrients, much in the same way that animals such as humans signal hunger with hormones,” he said. “These chemical signals are mobile within the plant, traveling between roots and shoots via the vasculature. This means that information on what is happening nutrient-wise near the roots is available in the abo-

veground part of the plant in the form of these signals.”

To observe plants’ needs for nutrients, an extra element was added – a naturally occurring red pigment. RedAlert Living Sensors translate information from hormone signals – like if there’s enough nitrogen nearby the roots and if not, how severe the deficiency is – into molecules of a red pigment. The leaves of the plants gradually turn red depending on how much nitrogen is present in the soil.

“Our hope is that adoption of this invention will help growers to have more and better-quality information to work with when deciding on nitrogen management strategy for their operation. Thanks to the horticulturists on our team, we understand that each operation has its own needs, and we hope to empower further refinement of their strategies by providing a low-cost and easy-to-use tool for learning about what the crop is actually experiencing around its roots,” Belding said. “We and the growers we’ve talked to are unsatisfied with existing nitrogen sensing technologies and would like to see RedAlert make high quality information accessible to every operation of any scale.”

Others see value in the invention, too. The two doctoral students were chosen to present at the national Collegiate Inventors Competition, which took place in Washington, D.C. in October 2025. The competition is run by the National Inventors Hall of Fame and was judged by National Inventors Hall of Fame inductees and U.S. Patent and Trademark Office officials.

Belding relayed that while it was nerve-racking to present to impressive inventors, the presentation went well. The team received the second-place prize for graduate student inventors, taking home \$5,000 and a patent acceleration certificate to fast-track their patent application.

Belding added that a similar system could be engineered into any dicot species based on the team’s current understanding of the biology. However, he adds that it’s not necessary for a RedAlert version of every crop to be made in order for the invention to be useful in different applications.

“(We) envision a ‘sentinel’ model, in which some RedAlert plants are planted alongside or interspersed with your main crop,” he explained.

Still, there are some limitations to this model. For example, RedAlert

( See Tomato on page 2)



**Above:** Farmers rely on UTVs and ATVs for routine land maintenance as evidenced by bringing down a rotted log for firewood use. Photo by Leondia Walchle

## Farm machinery sales down in 2025; low net farm income cited

By Michele F. Mihaljevich  
Indiana Correspondent

MILWAUKEE, Wis. – Sales of a variety of farm machinery were down in 2025, a year called “challenging” by the head of an equipment dealers association.

Purchases of all two-wheel-drive farm tractors dropped 9.2 percent last year, the Association of Equipment Manufacturers (AEM) said Jan. 13. Two-wheel-drive tractors of less than 40 HP fell 9.1 percent, while those 40-100 HP declined 4 percent. Those 100 HP and over were down 22.6 percent. Four-wheel-drive tractors dropped 41.6 percent. Self-propelled combines fell 35.6 percent.

Overall, the year for farm equipment dealers was challenging, explained Brett Davis, CEO of the North American Equipment Dealers Association (NAEDA).

“Net farm income is still low and farmers refrained from making discretionary purchases,” Davis told Farm World. “Cash crop is very soft and impacting combine and HHP (high horsepower) tractor sales. Specialty crops fared better along with cattle and dairy. Mid-range tractors and hay tools performed better than combines and HHP tractors. (The) small tractor market remains soft, but is steady year over year.”

NAEDA represents more than 3,500 equipment dealers across North America.

Bloated new and used equipment inventories hurt dealers, he noted. Some farmers also minimized their spending on repairs, he added.

Curt Blades, AEM’s senior vice president, said the data is a result of the economic instability and pressures farmers have faced over the past months.

“Throughout this short-term decline in sales, equipment manufacturers re-

main committed to supporting farmers with the equipment they need,” he said in a statement. “As we look into 2026, AEM remains confident in the industry’s resilience and unique ability to adapt.”

Davis said he expects to see a rebound in sales early in 2026. “Government incentives will help drive some sales of needed replacement equipment,” he said. “I expect to see a busier than normal quarter one.”

In the most recent Purdue University/CME Group Ag Economy Barometer, 60 percent of respondents said it was a bad time to make large investments. In a separate question, 55 percent of respondents said they planned to reduce their machinery purchases, up from 51 percent the month before.

“There’s no evidence of any confidence rise there,” noted James Mintert, emeritus professor of agricultural economics at Purdue. “(There’s also) no change virtually in the percentage of people who said that it’s a good time (to buy equipment). I think that went from 7 to 6 percent. I don’t think we’re going to see any rush to the doors of the machinery dealers.”


Mintert discussed the results of the ag barometer on the Jan. 6 Purdue Commercial AgCast with Michael Langemeier, director of the university’s Center for Commercial Agriculture.

Langemeier said December’s barometer asked respondents what they would do if the government offered payments similar to those included in the 2019 Market Facilitation Program (MFP).

“I think 10 percent said they would invest in machinery,” he said. “So, a very small percent. It’s not zero. I think that just reflects how tight margins still are, even with the potential of these payments. Margins are tight enough that some people are going to have a little bit of trouble repaying debt, yet alone buying new machinery.”




**Above:** Ava Forystek uses a sensor to measure the leaves of tomato plants.

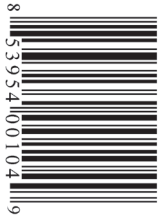


**Tennessee is home to only freshwater pearl farm in U.S.**  
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**In this Farm World:**

**Scenes from the Fort Wayne Farm Show . . . . . Page 8 B**







# Tomato

FROM PAGE 1

would not work with maize, as maize is a monocot and its nitrogen needs are enormous. A tomato sentinel plant would detect no issue with an intermediate nitrogen level that might be plenty for tomato but still cause sub-optimal yield in maize, Belding said. He noted that the research group has some potential solutions in the works for addressing this issue.

“(We) believe our research is important for the benefits it could bring in providing greater access to smart agriculture tools and in reducing nitrogen waste,” Belding said. “Nitrogen waste has many harmful downstream conse-

quences, including immense ecological harm to our waterways and dangerous contamination of well water in rural areas, and we would love to see these problems reduced.”

Belding shared that his research efforts are currently focused on continuing the characterization of RedAlert and integrating the system with modern computer vision and robotic capabilities. Forystek’s research work is focused on developing and testing optimized growing standards for the emerging market of greenhouse-grown teen leaf lettuce.



Above: Ava Forystek and Jacob Belding check the color of the leaves against a gradient scale.



Above: RedAlert plants turn a vivid red when the plant has detected low nitrogen levels in the soil.



Above: Jacob Belding and Ava Forystek are the inventors of the RedAlert Living Sensors.

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# USDA finds more corn; famers plant fewer wheat acres

The USDA completely caught trade off guard in this month's balance sheet update by not only raising the U.S. corn yield but finding more harvested acres as well. The USDA raised the average U.S. corn yield to 186.5 bushels per acre, up 0.5 bushels, and added in 1.2 million harvested acres. These came partly from what the USDA claims is a lack of silage acres, which is being highly contested. The combination of these raised the U.S. corn crop to 17.02 billion bu, up 268 million bu from December. The USDA increased feed and residual demand by 100 mbu and trimmed industrial demand 10 mbu for a net increase to ending stocks of 198 mbu, putting it a 2.227 bbu. This is a comfortable 13.6 percent stocks to use. It is interesting to note that even with these bearish numbers, the USDA raised the average cash value on corn by 10 cents, putting it at \$4.10 per bushel.

The USDA left its U.S. soybean yield unchanged this month at 53 bushels per acre but added in another 100,000 harvested acres. This added 9 mbu of soybeans to the U.S. crop, taking it to 4.262 bbu. The USDA made several changes to the demand side of balance sheets, including raising crush by 15 mbu and decreasing exports by 60 mbu. The net result was a 60 mbu increase to carryout, taking it to 350 mbu. This is an 8.2 percent stocks to use and gives the complex more breathing room. The USDA is now projecting an average cash value on soybeans of \$10.20, down 30 cents from last month.

Few changes were made to wheat balance sheets this month. The USDA added in 4 mbu of wheat beginning stocks, putting available stocks at 855 mbu. The USDA lowered seed usage by 1 mbu and feed consumption by 20 mbu, bumping ending stocks to 926 mbu. This is a 45.6 percent stocks to use and equate to an average cash value of \$4.90, down 10 cents from last month.

The USDA also released its winter wheat acreage report, estimating plantings at 33 million acres. This was 600,000 more acres than expected, but 200,000 fewer acres than in 2025.

Quarterly stocks data was also released and as expected, inventories of corn, soybeans, and wheat were all higher than a year ago. The December 1st U.S. corn supply was 13.3 bbu, a 10 percent increase from December 2024. On farm stocks were up 14 per-

cent from last year and off farm stocks were up 4 percent. The U.S. soybean inventory was 3.29 bbu, up 6 percent on the year. On farm soybean stocks were up 2 percent and off farm increased by 10 percent. The U.S. wheat inventory was 1.68 bbu, a year-to-year increase of 7 percent. On farm wheat stocks were up 11 percent and off farm inventory was up 11 percent.

World carryout estimates also saw some sizable changes. The world corn carryout is now estimated at 290.91 million metric tons, well above the 279.15 mmt estimate from December. This was a result of the larger U.S. crop, but also a 6 mmt increase to China's corn crop. The world soybean carryout is now estimated at 124.41 mmt, up from the prior 122.37 mmt estimate. World wheat ending stocks are forecast at 278.25 mmt, up from the previous 274.87 mmt from a larger Argentine crop.

The USDA made a few sizable changes to 2026 beef and pork balance sheets. Beef production for this year is now estimated at 25.74 billion pounds, up 10 million pounds from the last estimate. This is 260 million pounds less than the 2025 total. The

USDA trimmed U.S. beef exports by 60 million pounds to a total of 2.425 billion pounds. This is a 143 million pounds decline from 2025. U.S. beef imports are now estimated at 5.525 billion pounds, up 75 million. The average steer value for 2026 is estimated at \$235.75 per hundredweight.

U.S. pork production for 2026 is now estimated at 28.22 billion pounds, up a sizable 740 million pounds from the last projection. This is also a 640-million-pound increase from 2025. Pork exports are estimated at 7.085 billion pounds, up 65 million from a month ago. This is also 123 million more pounds of pork than the U.S. exported in 2025. Hogs are forecast to average \$66.75 per hundredweight in 2026.

Census export data for the month of October was mixed. U.S. corn exports totaled 248.5 million bu, 6 percent less than in September, but a 63.4 percent increase from October 2024. Ethanol exports were record sized on October at 158 million gallons. U.S. soybean exports in October reached 197.1 mbu, a 43 percent decline from October 2024 and the lowest volume since 2008/09. Soy meal exports were a record though, totaling 1.4 mmt.

Wheat exports in October were down 39 percent from September but a six-year high for the month at 72.2 mbu.

Red meat exports were also mixed for the month. October beef exports totaled 201 million pounds, the lowest volume since 2015. This was not the surprise given the tight U.S. cattle and beef inventory. U.S. beef imports in October totaled 136,900 mt, up 6.7 percent from September. U.S. pork exports in the month reached 632.2 million pounds, a 16 percent increase from September.

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By Karl Setzer

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Veracitor 80VX 2 Stage Mast,  
144.7" Max Lift Ht, 90" Lowered  
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Plumbing, tier 4, 2013 US EPA  
Label, Kubota V3800 CR-T-EF02  
54.6 KW 3.8L Dsl Eng...

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# Michigan Milk Producers are expanding into cottage cheese

By Stan Maddux  
Indiana Correspondent

The Michigan Milk Producers Association (MMPA) will reactivate a plant once used by the world's largest maker of mozzarella cheese. MMPA will use the facility in Remus to make cottage cheese once it completes a re-modeling and retooling of the recently shuttered operation acquired from Leprino Foods.

The investment will allow MMPA to introduce cottage cheese for the first time to its existing line of dairy products.

"This acquisition represents a meaningful step forward in MMPA's long term strategy to grow our cooperative, invest in Michigan's dairy industry and deliver increased value to our members," said Joe Diglio, president and CEO of MMPA.

MMPA is the ninth largest cooperative in the nation by member milk volume and serves customers in Michigan, Indiana, Ohio and Wisconsin.

Originally, the plant was purchased by MMPA in 1983. Leprino Foods began operating it four years later and assumed full ownership of

the facility in 2006. In early 2024, MMPA worked with Leprino Foods to shift the plant's product mix to fit the company's business needs.

Lance FitzSimmons, president and CEO of Leprino Foods, said his company and MMPA will continue to be important business partners as they have been for several decades.

"We are pleased that we have been able to successfully transfer ownership of the Remus facility back to MMPA, where it will have the opportunity to be a productive asset for the community and for Michigan dairy farmers for many to come," he said.

Diglio expects a smooth transition before and after the plant is put back into operation due to MMPA's past involvement with the facility and presence in the local area.

"With our longstanding familiarity with the Remus facility and deep ties to the surrounding community, we are excited about this opportunity to revitalize operations and bring new products to market," he said.

Leprino Foods, a maker of traditional mozzarella and other cheese blends, has over 50 patents in cheese and dairy ingredient technology.

The company, headquartered in Denver, Colo., owns and operates a cheese and whey manufacturing plant in Allendale, Mich. Other plants belonging to the company are in California, New Mexico, New York and Texas. Leprino Foods also has offices in China and Singapore.

In addition, MMPA is embarking on a project to expand its ultra-filtered milk production capacity by three million pounds a day at an existing plant in Ovid, a community of about 1,400 residents in the central part of Michigan.

The extra production will add to the ultra-filtered milk coming out of another MMPA operation in Constantine, a village of about 2,000 people in St. Joseph County in the southwest part of the state.

Both projects will cost more than \$120 million combined and are expected to produce more than 70 jobs, according to MMPA.

"We're excited to respond to the resurgence in demand for cottage cheese with a product that reflects our high standards and to build on the strong performance of our ultra-filtered milk produced in Constantine. Together, these investments position MMPA to serve our customers more competitively and ensure long term value for our members," said Doug Chapin, MMPA board chairman.

The work at both sites was incentivized, in part, by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC).

MEDC CEO and Michigan Strategic Fund (MSF) Chairman Quentin Messer Jr. said the continued investment by MMPA creates opportunities for people in and around the area.

"The agricultural industry, including dairy farmers, plays a significant role in Michigan's economy from raising cows to processing facilities and continuing product innovation in the food science industry. Their work continues to show up on grocery shelves and at dinner tables. The MSF board is proud to support them," he said.

The investments also support MMPA's strategic goals of expanding its manufacturing footprint, enhancing production capabilities and strengthening the dairy supply chain while staying rooted in the cooperative's nearly 110-year legacy of member-focused leadership, MMPA officials said.



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QUALITY USED EQUIPMENT OF ALL TYPES



# MARKETS

## Blue Grass Stockyards Lexington, KY

Livestock Weighted Average Report for 1/12/2026 - Final AUCTION			
	This Week	Last Reported 1/5/2026	Last Year
Total Receipts:	1,189	1,441	994
Feeder Cattle:	1,009(84.9%)	1,277(88.6%)	928(93.4%)
Slaughter Cattle:	165(13.9%)	149(10.3%)	62(6.2%)
Replacement Cattle:	15(1.3%)	15(1.0%)	4(0.4%)

Compared to last Monday the feeder market was sharply higher with a good quality offering. Feeder steers and heifers 650 lbs and under were mostly 10.00 to 20.00 higher or greater in spots with a good supply and strong demand for all classes of feeder cattle. Yearling steers and heifers appeared stronger as well but with limited head to head comparisons. Feeder buyers were highly active today and willing to increase the premiums paid for weaned and pre-conditioned calves. Slaughter cows and bulls were 2.00 to 5.00 lower with a good supply and moderate demand. Supply included: 85% Feeder Cattle (60% Steers, 0% Dairy Steers, 30% Heifers, 10% Bulls, 0% Dairy Heifers); 14% Slaughter Cattle (2% Steers, 82% Cows, 17% Bulls); 1% Replacement Cattle (24% Stock Cows, 59% Bred Cows, 6% Bred Heifers, 12% Cow-Calf Pairs). Feeder cattle supply over 600 lbs was 56%.

Groups of 20 Head or More

### STEERS

53 Hd 90% Black/RED	650 lbs	411.00
20 Hd 90% Black/CHRX	764 lbs	347.00
124 Hd 70% Black/XBRED	867 lbs	350.00
60 Hd 60% Black/XBRED	937 lbs	335.00

### FEEDER CATTLE

#### STEERS - Medium and Large 1-2 (Per Cwt / Actual Wt)

Head	Wt Range	Avg Wt	Price Range	Avg Price
2	200-230	215	610.00-630.00	620.70 Fancy
3	320-342	335	530.00-550.00	536.37
1	335	335	615.00	615.00 Fancy
3	357-375	363	457.50-485.00	466.97
10	360-390	370	602.50-630.00	623.54 Fancy
1	405	405	465.00	465.00
10	425-442	440	500.00-525.00	517.56 Fancy
4	410-417	414	555.00-595.00	574.83 Value Added
9	476-498	489	430.00-442.50	438.06
21	450-495	481	457.00-482.00	466.70 Fancy
4	457	457	525.00	525.00 Value Added
4	525-527	526	393.00-405.00	398.99
1	535	535	337.50	337.50 Full
17	503-540	525	430.00-452.00	445.89 Value Added
22	560-595	583	380.00-407.00	401.90
31	558-595	577	427.00-455.00	433.43 Value Added
7	600-640	621	363.00-377.50	371.76
6	618	618	457.50	457.50 Fancy
15	600-642	620	395.00-420.00	410.92 Value Added
18	650-687	671	349.00-377.00	366.36
80	650-679	656	387.00-411.00	408.52 Value Added
11	715-730	716	327.00-349.00	344.96
25	757-764	763	332.00-347.00	344.97
9	757	757	360.00	360.00 Value Added
11	813-845	827	326.00-339.00	330.36
6	857-897	884	300.00-302.50	301.52
133	865-867	867	331.00-350.00	349.26 Value Added
60	937	937	335.00	335.00 Value Added
5	957	957	296.00	296.00
1	1020	1020	271.00	271.00
3	1083	1083	266.00	266.00
3	1150-1175	1158	202.00-220.00	208.09
9	1201-1241	1214	210.00-218.00	215.27

#### STEERS - Medium and Large 2 (Per Cwt / Actual Wt)

Head	Wt Range	Avg Wt	Price Range	Avg Price
1	490	490	397.50	397.50
1	545	545	362.00	362.00
1	915	915	262.50	262.50

#### STEERS - Medium and Large 2-3 (Per Cwt / Actual Wt)

Head	Wt Range	Avg Wt	Price Range	Avg Price
1	310	310	395.00	395.00
2	500-535	518	315.00-330.00	322.25

Head	Wt Range	Avg Wt	Price Range	Avg Price
1	625	625	237.50	237.50
1	850	850	192.50	192.50

#### HEIFERS - Medium and Large 1-2 (Per Cwt / Actual Wt)

Head	Wt Range	Avg Wt	Price Range	Avg Price
1	180	180	470.00	470.00
2	220-245	233	435.00-455.00	445.54
3	280-295	288	415.00-440.00	425.00
1	270	270	470.00	470.00 Fancy
2	305-310	308	401.00-410.00	405.54
6	302-325	307	427.50-442.50	431.66 Fancy
9	350-395	373	415.00-447.50	433.03
8	362-381	375	480.00-502.50	488.57 Fancy
15	405-445	427	402.00-427.50	414.47
17	401-430	413	430.00-462.50	442.45 Fancy
24	452-498	480	390.00-417.50	407.33
16	450-475	463	422.50-447.50	434.02 Fancy
13	505-545	536	360.00-383.00	367.47
12	505-543	522	389.00-392.00	390.14 Value Added
14	560-598	579	350.00-375.00	361.10
33	553-596	575	380.00-402.00	384.77 Value Added
17	615-647	636	340.00-357.50	354.39
9	615-617	617	362.00-375.00	364.88 Value Added
27	650-690	669	335.00-357.00	347.80
10	700-745	723	305.00-327.00	320.85
8	758-797	781	300.00-319.00	315.59
2	825	825	303.00	303.00
1	1015	1015	242.00	242.00

#### HEIFERS - Medium and Large 2 (Per Cwt / Actual Wt)

Head	Wt Range	Avg Wt	Price Range	Avg Price
1	220	220	410.00	410.00
2	275-295	285	390.00-402.50	396.03
1	330	330	385.00	385.00
1	475	475	341.00	341.00

5	520-540	527	347.50-351.00	350.31
1	570	570	320.00	320.00
2	690	690	315.00-320.00	317.50
7	760-781	773	262.50-285.00	277.54
1	835	835	261.00	261.00
1	855	855	260.00	260.00

#### HEIFERS - Medium and Large 2-3 (Per Cwt / Actual Wt)

Head	Wt Range	Avg Wt	Price Range	Avg Price
1	230	230	375.00	375.00

#### HEIFERS - Large 1-2 (Per Cwt / Actual Wt)

Head	Wt Range	Avg Wt	Price Range	Avg Price
1	595	595	339.00	339.00
1	965	965	230.00	230.00

#### DAIRY HEIFERS - Large 3 (Per Cwt / Actual Wt)

Head	Wt Range	Avg Wt	Price Range	Avg Price
2	787	787	202.50	202.50

#### BULLS - Medium and Large 1-2 (Per Cwt / Actual Wt)

Head	Wt Range	Avg Wt	Price Range	Avg Price
3	205-240	217	520.00-522.50	520.79
1	235	235	590.00	590.00 Fancy
1	345	345	645.00	645.00 Thin Fleshed
6	350-390	373	502.50-510.00	503.96
3	360-395	375	575.00-590.00	579.93 Fancy
4	377	377	645.00	645.00 Thin Fleshed
2	425	425	425.00	425.00
2	420	420	547.50	547.50 Fancy
10	475-495	481	405.00-429.00	424.88
1	450	450	475.00	475.00 Fancy
2	515-525	520	385.00-401.00	392.92
8	515-541	529	407.50-432.50	417.18 Fancy
1	515	515	445.00	445.00 Thin Fleshed
4	565-590	573	370.00-381.00	375.21
4	550-562	557	387.00-402.00	391.48 Fancy
2	625-635	630	355.00-369.00	361.94
5	650-695	683	342.50-350.00	348.32
6	660-665	661	367.50	367.50 Fancy
4	725-731	730	330.00-335.00	333.76
2	805-820	813	300.00-313.00	306.44

#### BULLS - Medium and Large 2 (Per Cwt / Actual Wt)

Head	Wt Range	Avg Wt	Price Range	Avg Price
1	230	230	465.00	465.00
2	250-295	273	430.00-445.00	438.12
2	500-510	505	329.00-365.00	346.82
3	572-585	576	350.00-353.00	351.98
2	660-690	675	315.00-325.00	320.11
1	840	840	280.00	280.00

#### BULLS - Medium and Large 2-3 (Per Cwt / Actual Wt)

Head	Wt Range	Avg Wt	Price Range	Avg Price
1	185	185	380.00	380.00
2	215-220	218	400.00-405.00	402.47
3	511	511	307.50	307.50
2	805-820	813	170.00-190.00	180.09

### SLAUGHTER CATTLE

#### STEERS - Select and Choice 1-2 (Per Cwt / Actual Wt)

Head	Wt Range	Avg Wt	Price Range	Avg Price	Dressing
1	1290	1290	261.00	261.00	Average
1	1335	1335	223.00	223.00	Low

#### COWS - Breaker 75-80% (Per Cwt / Actual Wt)

Head	Wt Range	Avg Wt	Price Range	Avg Price	Dressing
32	1240-2025	1573	150.00-166.00	158.72	Average
2	1380-1705	1543	169.00	169.00	High
6	1175-2015	1653	143.00-148.00	146.12	Low

#### COWS - Boner 80-85% (Per Cwt / Actual Wt)

Head	Wt Range	Avg Wt	Price Range	Avg Price	Dressing
21	1070-1650	1277	150.00-165.00	157.57	Average
2	945-1505	1225	169.00-170.00	169.39	High
12	1145-1610	1301	139.00-149.00	144.74	Low

#### COWS - Lean 85-90% (Per Cwt / Actual Wt)

Head	Wt Range	Avg Wt	Price Range	Avg Price	Dressing
14	930-1415	1159	129.00-145.00	136.59	Average
7	945-1450	1141	152.00-168.00	156.74	High
10	930-1560	1146	105.00-125.00	119.20	Low
3	770-1090	880	85.00-100.00	95.57	Very Low

#### BULLS - 1-2 (Per Cwt / Actual Wt)

Head	Wt Range	Avg Wt	Price Range	Avg Price	Dressing
13	1315-2105	1604	183.00-198.00	188.73	Average
5	1660-2235	1977	201.00-218.00	208.63	High
4	1045-1820	1461	154.00-173.00	165.71	Low

### REPLACEMENT CATTLE

#### STOCK COWS - Medium and Large 1-2 (Per Cwt / Actual Wt)

Age	Stage	Head	Wt Range	Avg Wt	Price Range	Avg Price
2-4	O	2	820-1140	980	217.00-233.00	226.31
5-8	O	2	1145-1150	1148	187.50-188.00	187.75

#### BRED COWS - Medium and Large 1-2 (Per Unit / Actual Wt)

Age	Stage	Head	Wt Range	Avg Wt	Price Range	Avg Price
2-4	T2	4	1030-1320	1158	2450.00-2900.00	2576.24
>5	T2	6	1085-1605	1428	2350.00-3050.00	2621.41

#### BRED HEIFERS - Medium and Large 1-2 (Per Unit / Actual Wt)

Age	Stage	Head	Wt Range	Avg Wt	Price Range	Avg Price
<2	T2	1	890	890	1750.00	1750.00

#### COW-CALF PAIRS - Medium and Large 1-2 w/ <150 lbs calf (Per Unit / Actual Wt)

Age	Stage	Head	Wt Range	Avg Wt	Price Range	Avg Price
>5	O	2	1080-1340	1210	2150.00-2850.00	2462.40

Please Note: The above USDA LPGMN price report is reflective of the majority of classes and grades of livestock offered for sale. There may be instances where some sales do not fit within reporting guidelines and therefore will not be included in the report. Prices are reported on an FOB basis, unless otherwise noted.

Explanatory Notes:

Stage (Cattle) - Represents pregnancy stage (O = open; T1 = 1st Trimester, 1 to 3 months; T1-2 = 1st/2nd trimester, 1 to 6 months; T2 = 2nd Trimester, 4 to 6 months; T2-3 = 2nd/3rd Trimester, 4 to 9 months; T3 = 3rd Trimester, 7 to 9 months; T1-3 = all trimesters, 1 to 9 months)

Age - Numerical representation of age in years.

Source: USDA AMS Livestock, Poultry & Grain Market News

KY Dept of Ag Market News Richard Midden

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## Weekly Combined Regional Shell Egg Report

Report for: 01/04/2026 - 01/10/2026

### National Shell Eggs - Caged

Delivered Warehouse, White, Cents Per Dozen				
	Class	Price Range	Average Price	Price Change
Last Reported (1/2/2026)	Extra Large	64.00 - 95.00	82.00	-24.25
	Large	63.00 - 88.00	75.94	-24.25
	Medium	35.00 - 56.00	46.00	-12.00

### Midwest Shell Eggs - Caged



# MARKETS

## Kentucky Daily Grain Bids

Grain Report for Thursday, January 15, 2026 - Final

FUTURE SETTLEMENTS									
Exchange	Commodity	Closing Settlement Prices (¢/bu) as of 1/15/26							
CBOT	Corn	420.25 (Mar 26)	427.75 (May 26)	434.00 (Jul 26)	433.25 (Sep 26)	446.75 (Dec 26)	460.25 (Mar 27)	467.25 (May 27)	
CBOT	Soybeans	1053.00 (Mar 26)	1064.25 (May 26)	1076.25 (Jul 26)	1073.25 (Aug 26)	1058.75 (Sep 26)	1064.25 (Nov 26)	1075.50 (Jan 27)	
CBOT	Wheat	510.50 (Mar 26)	521.50 (May 26)	533.50 (Jul 26)	548.00 (Sep 26)	567.00 (Dec 26)	583.00 (Mar 27)	591.50 (May 27)	
CBOT	White Oats	293.25 (Mar 26)	300.25 (May 26)	305.00 (Jul 26)	308.75 (Sep 26)	322.25 (Dec 26)	325.75 (Mar 27)	331.75 (May 27)	
KCBT	Wheat	517.25 (Mar 26)	528.75 (May 26)	541.75 (Jul 26)	556.75 (Sep 26)	576.75 (Dec 26)	592.25 (Mar 27)	600.25 (May 27)	
MGE	Wheat	562.50 (Mar 26)	574.00 (May 26)	586.00 (Jul 26)	602.75 (Sep 26)	621.75 (Dec 26)	635.75 (Mar 27)		

US #2 WHITE CORN (BULK)					
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Country Elevators - Conventional					
Region/Location	Basic (¢/Bu)	Basis Change	Price (\$/Bu)	Price Change	Average
Pennyrile	50.00H to 190.00H	UNCH	4.7025-6.1025	DN 0.0175	5.4025
Pennyrile	50.00Z	UNCH	4.9675	DN 0.0100	4.9675
Barge Loading Elevators - Conventional					
Region/Location	Basic (¢/Bu)	Basis Change	Price (\$/Bu)	Price Change	Average
Ohio River - Lower KY	180.00H	UNCH	6.0025	DN 0.0175	6.0025
Ohio River - Lower KY	55.00Z	UNCH	5.0175	DN 0.0100	5.0175
Purchase	175.00H	UNCH	5.9525	DN 0.0175	5.9525
Purchase	65.00Z	UNCH	5.1175	DN 0.0100	5.1175

US #2 YELLOW CORN (BULK)					
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Country Elevators - Conventional					
Region/Location	Basic (¢/Bu)	Basis Change	Price (\$/Bu)	Price Change	Average
Purchase	15.00H	UNCH	4.3525	DN 0.0175	4.3525
Green River	20.00H	UNCH	4.4025	DN 0.0175	4.4025
Green River	-10.00Z	UNCH	4.3675	DN 0.0100	4.3675
Pennyrile	-15.00H to 17.00H	UNCH-UP 3.00	4.0525-4.3725	DN 0.0175-UP 0.0125	4.1642
Pennyrile	-30.00Z to -15.00Z	UNCH	4.1675-4.3175	DN 0.0100	4.2308
Louisville	-8.00H	UNCH	4.1225	DN 0.0175	4.1225
Louisville	-8.00H	UNCH	4.1225	DN 0.0175	4.1225
Bluegrass	-10.00H	UNCH	4.1025	DN 0.0175	4.1025
Bluegrass	-45.00Z	UNCH	4.0175	DN 0.0100	4.0175
Barge Loading Elevators - Conventional					
Region/Location	Basic (¢/Bu)	Basis Change	Price (\$/Bu)	Price Change	Average
Ohio River - Upper KY	3.00H to 4.00H	UP 3.00-UP 1.00	4.2325-4.2425	UP 0.0125-DN 0.0075	4.2375
Ohio River - Upper KY	-32.00Z to -30.00Z	UNCH	4.1475-4.1675	DN 0.0100	4.1575
Ohio River - Lower KY	10.00H to 20.00H	UP 2.00-UNCH	4.3025-4.4025	UP 0.0025-DN 0.0175	4.3575
Ohio River - Lower KY	-35.00Z to -20.00Z	UNCH	4.1175-4.2675	DN 0.0100	4.1942
Purchase	13.00H to 26.00H	UP 3.00-UNCH	4.3325-4.4625	UP 0.0125-DN 0.0175	4.3900
Purchase	-35.00Z to -15.00U	UNCH	4.1175-4.1825	DN 0.0100-DN 0.0125	4.1542

US #1 SOYBEANS (BULK)					
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Country Elevators - Conventional					
Region/Location	Basic (¢/Bu)	Basis Change	Price (\$/Bu)	Price Change	Average
Purchase	5.00H	UNCH	10.5800	UP 0.1050	10.5800
Green River	-20.00H	UNCH	10.3300	UP 0.1050	10.3300
Green River	-40.00X	UNCH	10.2425	UP 0.0625	10.2425
Pennyrile	-25.00H to 22.00H	UNCH-UP 2.00	10.2800-10.7500	UP 0.1050-UP 0.1250	10.3971
Pennyrile	-60.00X to -18.00X	UNCH	10.0425-10.4625	UP 0.0625	10.1458
Louisville	-59.00H	UNCH	9.9400	UP 0.1050	9.9400
Louisville	-59.00H	UNCH	9.9400	UP 0.1050	9.9400
Bluegrass	-40.00H	UNCH	10.1300	UP 0.1050	10.1300
Bluegrass	-75.00X	UNCH	9.8925	UP 0.0625	9.8925
Barge Loading Elevators - Conventional					
Region/Location	Basic (¢/Bu)	Basis Change	Price (\$/Bu)	Price Change	Average
Ohio River - Upper KY	5.00H to 7.00H	UP 1.00-UP 2.00	10.5800-10.6000	UP 0.1150-UP 0.1250	10.5900
Ohio River - Upper KY	-30.00X	UP 1.00-UNCH	10.3425	UP 0.0725-UP 0.0625	10.3425
Ohio River - Lower KY	11.00H to 30.00H	UP 2.00-UP 7.00	10.6400-10.8300	UP 0.1250-UP 0.1750	10.7283
Ohio River - Lower KY	-25.00X to -10.00X	UNCH-UP 2.00	10.3925-10.5425	UP 0.0625-UP 0.0825	10.4550
Purchase	11.00H to 24.00H	UNCH	10.6400-10.7700	UP 0.1050	10.7025
Purchase	-25.00X to -20.00X	UNCH	10.3925-10.4425	UP 0.0625	10.4258

US #1 MILLING SOFT RED WINTER WHEAT (BULK)					
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Country Elevators - Conventional					
Region/Location	Basic (¢/Bu)	Basis Change	Price (\$/Bu)	Price Change	Average
Pennyrile	20.00H	UNCH	5.3050	DN 0.0200	5.3050
Pennyrile	10.00N	UNCH	5.4350	DN 0.0275	5.4350

US #2 SOFT RED WINTER WHEAT (BULK)					
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Country Elevators - Conventional					
Region/Location	Basic (¢/Bu)	Basis Change	Price (\$/Bu)	Price Change	Average
Purchase	-15.00N	UNCH	5.1850	DN 0.0275	5.1850
Green River	-75.00N	UNCH	4.5850	DN 0.0275	4.5850
Pennyrile	-65.00H to -40.00H	UNCH	4.4550-4.7050	DN 0.0200	4.5350
Pennyrile	-55.00N to -5.00N	UNCH	4.7850-5.2850	DN 0.0275	4.9517
Louisville	-33.00H	UNCH	4.7750	DN 0.0200	4.7750
Louisville	-79.00N to -34.00N	UNCH	4.5450-4.9950	DN 0.0275	4.7700
Barge Loading Elevators - Conventional					
Region/Location	Basic (¢/Bu)	Basis Change	Price (\$/Bu)	Price Change	Average
Ohio River - Upper KY	-25.00N	UNCH	5.0850	DN 0.0275	5.0850
Ohio River - Lower KY	-21.00N to -5.00N	UP 1.00-UNCH	5.1250-5.2850	DN 0.0175-DN 0.0275	5.2030
Purchase	-19.00H to -12.00N	UNCH	4.9150-5.2150	DN 0.0200-DN 0.0275	5.0650
Purchase	-17.00N to -10.00N	UNCH	5.1650-5.2350	DN 0.0275	5.2117

Explanatory Notes: Price & Basis Values quoted are for Current Delivery, unless otherwise noted.

CBOT/KCBT/MGE Trade month symbols: F January; G February; H March; J April; K May; M June; N July; Q August; U September; V October; X November; Z December. FOB: Freight On Board. CIF: Cost, Insurance, and Freight. T: Truck, R: Rail, B: Barge, T/R: Truck/Rail, R/B: Rail/Barge, T/R/B: Truck/Rail/Barge, OV: Ocean Vessel

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## Weekly National Sheep Summary For Week Ending Friday, January 9, 2026

Weekly Trends: Compared to last week slaughter woolled and shorn lambs sold steady. Slaughter ewes sold firm.		Billings: No test.	
All sheep sold per hundred weight (CWT) unless otherwise specified.		Ft. Collins: 140.000-180.00.	
Slaughter Lambs: Choice and Prime 1-3		Kalona: 110.00-150.00.	
San Angelo: 70-80 lbs 345.00; 90-100 lbs 350.00; 100-110 lbs 300.00-390.00; 110-120 lbs 375.00; 130-140 lbs 280.00.		Equity Coop: No test.	
New Holland: 90-100 lbs 355.00-360.00; 110-120 lbs 305.00-325.00; 120-130 lbs 315.00-330.00; 130-140 lbs 275.00-290.00.		Sioux Falls: No test.	
Billings: No test.		Buffalo, MO: No test.	
Ft. Collins: 50-60 lbs 340.00; 60-70 lbs 375.00; 70-80 lbs 305.00-332.50; 80-90 lbs 305.00-315.00; 90-100 lbs 290.00-310.00; 100-110 lbs 265.00-295.00; 110-120 lbs 260.00-285.00; 120-130 lbs 245.00-270.00.		Missouri: No test.	
Kalona: 50-60 lbs 385.00-490.00; 60-70 lbs 395.00-430.00; 70-80 lbs 350.00-400.00; 80-90 lbs 320.00-345.00 90-100 lbs 265.00-325.00.		Ft. Collins: No test.	
Equity Coop: No test.		Kalona: No test.	
Sioux Falls: No test.		Equity Coop: No test.	
Buffalo, MO: No test.		Replacement Ewes: Medium and Large 1-2:	
Missouri: No test.		San Angelo: No test.	
Arkansas: No test.		Billings: No test.	
Equity Coop: No test.		Ft. Collins: No test.	
Slaughter Ewes: Good 2-3:		South Dakota: No test.	
San Angelo: 138.00-149.00.		Kalona: No test.	
New Holland: 155.00-175.00.		Missouri: No test.	
		Arkansas: No test.	
		Sioux Falls: No test.	
		Buffalo, MO: No test.	
		Sheep and lamb slaughter under federal inspection for the week to date totaled 38,000 compared to 34,000 last week and 34,814 last year.	
		Source: USDA Livestock, Poultry and Grain Market News	
		General inquiries, please call: (202) 720-1990	
		email: <a href="mailto:mymarketnews@usda.gov">mymarketnews@usda.gov</a>	

## Daily Livestock and Poultry Slaughter

Report For Thursday, January 15, 2026 - Final

Current Day Slaughter									
		Prev Week	Last Year	2026	2025	Ytd			
Thurs., Jan. 15, 2026		WTD	WTD	WTD	YTD	YTD	% Change		
Calves	1,000	1,000	423	4,000	4,000	2,512	9,410	6,813	38.1%
Cattle	117,000	117,000	121,972	469,000	465,000	484,813	1,161,625	1,358,256	-14.5%
Hogs	492,000	485,000	483,797	1,973,000	1,966,000	1,926,099	5,517,017	5,843,073	-5.6%
Sheep	7,000	8,000	6,912	34,000	33,000	32,916	79,046	80,783	-2.2%
Chicken (Young)	35,475,000	35,384,000	35,398,000	141,387,000	141,536,000	140,850,000	363,812,000	387,789,000	-6.2%

Previous Daily Slaughter									
		Prev Week	Last Year	2026	2025	YTD			
Wed., Jan. 14, 2026		WTD	WTD	WTD	YTD	YTD	% Change		
Calves	1,000	1,000	720	3,000	3,000	2,089	8,410	6,390	31.6%
Cattle	117,000	115,000	122,153	352,000	348,000	362,841	1,044,625	1,236,284	-15.5%
Hogs	495,000	488,000	483,899	1,481,000	1,481,000	1,442,302	5,025,017	5,359,276	-6.2%
Sheep	7,000	6,000	6,824	27,000	25,000	26,004	72,046	73,871	-2.5%
Chicken (Young)	35,489,000	35,392,000	35,124,000	105,912,000	106,152,000	105,452,000	328,337,000	352,391,000	-6.8%

Previous Day Breakdown

Wed., Jan. 14, 2026

Cattle

Steers/Heifers ... 95,000

Cows/Bulls ... 22,000

Explanatory Notes: Livestock Species listed consists of young and mature animals.

Poultry references young only. Year to Date calculation is based on week 1 of calendar year

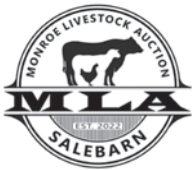
R = Revision    WTD = Week to Date    YTD = Year to Date

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# Charles A. Peggs Jr. (1944-2025)

Charles (Chuck) A. Peggs Jr., 81, of Rushville, Ind., passed away peacefully at home Dec. 23, 2025, surrounded by his kids. Born and raised in northern Rush County, Ind., Peggs was the son of Charles A. and Vera E. (Swinburn) Peggs, both of whom preceded him in death.

He was a brother to Dennis (Denny) Peggs (wife Carole), of Rushville; Sheryl Dysert (husband Steve, deceased), of South Bend; and Joseph Lawrence (Larry) Peggs (wife Karen), of Seminole, Fla.

He graduated from Mays High School in 1962 as valedictorian of his class and maintained many friendships from those days.

He attended Purdue University from 1962-1966. He was a legacy member of Pi Kappa Phi fraternity, the University Choir, and the Purdue Varsity Glee Club, the latter of which gave him the opportunity to travel in the U.S. and around Europe.

Upon graduating with a degree in agricultural economics in 1966, he worked in ag chemical sales before joining his dad and brother Denny on the family farm in 1971. Also in 1971, Chuck married the love of his life, Mar-jean (Jeanie) Moore on Aug. 14.

Peggs farmed in Rush County for 42 years and was a proud and devoted father to five children all of whom survive: Lori Cornell (husband Andrew), of Noblesville; Heather Wheeler (husband Mark), of Kokomo; Katie Nolley (husband Scott), of Morristown; Kevin Peggs, of Rushville; and Stefanie Phillips (husband Nick), of Fishers. His love for the Lord and his children was quiet but fierce. He found tremendous joy in his role as “Papa” to his 17 grandchildren: Chaney, Jackson, Maddux and Dawson Cornell; Kyle, Haley (husband Jacob Miller) and Abbigail Wheeler; Keaton (fiancé Jayla), Kendyl and Jackson Nolley; Porter, Sumner, Larryn and Layna Peggs; and Ella, Addison and Jolie Phillips; and two great-granddaughters, Lakelyn and Marina Nolley. He took delight in supporting his grandchildren at games and performances and in spending time with them at family gatherings. He is also survived by many nieces, nephews, cousins and




life-long friends whom he loved and treasured very much.

His life was full of adventure, laughter and story telling, but the joys of his life were simple – farming, family, friends, Jeanie’s home-cooked meals, and music. His musical ability included singing and playing the piano. He was even known to pick a banjo in his younger years. Besides people and music, some of his favorite things included popcorn, a good ear of sweet corn, homemade ice cream with strawberries, fishing for and eating bluegill, listening to the farm markets and Paul Harvey at noon, playing cards, and watching Boilermaker football and basketball.

His last act of service was to donate his body to science at the Indiana University School of Medicine in Indianapolis.

An informal celebration of his life will be Feb 7, in Fellowship Hall at Center Christian Church, Knightstown. The celebration will begin with an informal visitation from 1-5 p.m. and conclude with a brief service at 5 p.m. In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations be made in his memory to:

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**By TIM ALEXANDER**  
**Illinois Correspondent**

Sponsored by the Illinois Sustainable Ag Partnership (ISAP), panelists and programs represented included Jean Brokish, American Farmland Trust (panelist host); Rachel Curry, University of Illinois Extension (Watershed Outreach Program); Adrienne Marino, The Nature Conservancy (Batch and Build); Natalie Kerr, Illinois STAR (Illinois STAR); Kris Reynolds, American Farmland Trust (FLASH Batch N Grow); and

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# Valais Blacknose: The world's cutest sheep make a home in Ohio

By Mike Tanchevski  
Ohio Correspondent

RAVENNA, Ohio - Dangling strands of curly white wool, spiral horns, and a sprout of curly white bangs create a striking contrast with black markings on the face, ears, ankles and knees of what's been called the "world's cutest sheep." Valais Blacknose sheep, a relatively new breed to the United States, are prized for their friendly, pet-like disposition, as well as their endearing appearance.

According to Fred Hayes, owner of Valais Blacknose of Lovers Lane in Ravenna: "If you Google 'the world's cutest sheep,' that's what comes up." That's what caught Hayes' attention. "I've been around livestock since I was 10, and I've done everything on a small scale - I had goats and my kids were in 4-H; I was in 4-H - this breed just intrigued me," he said.

Since Valais Blacknose were not available in the United States, Fred and his wife, Cheryl, visited the United Kingdom. After attending a sheep show and visiting several flocks, they were taken with the breed. "Their disposition is so much different than a domestic sheep," Fred said. "Their personality - they do have one - they're just so friendly."

The breed was introduced in the U.S. in 2018 through frozen semen, followed by frozen embryos in 2019. That's when Fred got involved.

"In 2018, they only allowed frozen semen to come across from New Zealand and the UK, so everybody started the breed-up program," Hayes said. "Then in 2019, you could bring embryos, and that's what we did."

Because full-blood sheep could not initially be imported, breeders used a "breed-up" process. This involves breeding a full-blood Valais Blacknose ram with domestic ewes.

The "breed-up" program tracks genetic progress in sheep through five generations using the F-Scale (F1-F5).

Fred explained the process he followed. "I took Scottish Blackface and some Suffolk-Hamp cross ewes - I took 25 of them - and then I artificially inseminated them so that the offspring would be an F1, which is 50 percent. And then to get the F2, you take the F1 ewes and breed that to a full-blood ram and so on and so on."

A fifth-generation breed-up, or F5, is considered an American Purebred with a genetic percentage of approximately 97 percent.

Valais Blacknose of Lovers Lane relies on artificial insemination rather than

(Valais continued on page 13)



Above: Four Valais Blacknose lambs

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## Valais

FROM PAGE 10

natural mating to accelerate the growth of the flock and maintain high genetic standards. This also gives Fred access to diverse, high-quality genetics (via frozen semen) without needing to own or transport multiple rams.

After the initial use of embryo transfers in 2019, Fred now breeds his ewes through flushing: The process of stimulating a high-quality ewe to release multiple eggs, which are then fertilized and "flushed" out to be implanted into other surrogate ewes and IVF (In Vitro Fertilization). Eggs



Above: Valais Blacknose of Lovers Lane owner, Fred Hayes

are retrieved directly from the ewe and fertilized in a lab setting before being transferred back to a recipient.

This allows a single high-value ewe to produce many more offspring per year than she could through natural lambing. "We did a lot of IVF in September, November and December, and out of that, we have 10 ewes, I think, four of them are having twins," Fred said.

Despite the Hayes' prior sheep experience, Valais Blacknose posed different challenges than other breeds. "They're a high-maintenance breed, in the aspect of you have to shear them twice a year," Fred said. "They come from the Swiss Alps, and the atmosphere is so much different compared to Ohio, Florida, Texas, California...the weather's kind of hard on them."

Originally bred in Switzerland as meat and wool producers, the Valais Blacknose has not yet reached dual-purpose status in the U.S. There are currently only about 1,000 in the U.S., and they are primarily sold as high-value breeding stock rather than for meat or commercial wool.

Prices as high as \$10,000-\$30,000 for purebred breeding stock hamper widespread access to the breed. "We haven't got to the point where they're a dual-purpose breed," Fred said. "Some people will - at least the rams - sell them as pets."

Twice-yearly shearing provides value-added income from their wool, which increases in value after processing. "They're more of a fine wool breed, and just being so unique, you know, people value Valais Blacknose wool," Fred said.

Recognized by the Ohio Sheep Improvement Association, Valais Blacknose are cropping up at shows around the state and the nation. "They will go into a class called AOB, which is 'All Other Breeds,'" Fred said. "They'll go with the fine wool breeds and colored breeds of sheep."

They are primarily being shown by breeders, not as club lambs. "It's not the club lamb thing," Fred said. "People are showing breeding stock. This breed would not be able to compete in the market lamb show. They're just not there yet."

Hayes sees the number of breeders growing in the Midwest. "I know there's a couple of breeders in Ohio that have a handful, there's somebody that I talked to regularly in Iowa; he's got quite a few, and a couple of people in Indiana," he said. He's also moving the breed further south. "I sold 16 to a family in Florida this spring."

The Valais Blacknose Sheep Society (VBSS) states there were nearly 500 purebreds and over 3,000 in upgrade programs in the U.S. in 2025. The VBSS had over 600 members by 2025, with many actively breeding, indicating a strong interest and growing numbers.



Above: Moxie of Lovers Lane, a full-blooded Blacknose ewe

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# USDA releases 2024 Pesticide Data Program Annual Summary

The National Weather Service Climate Prediction Center outlook through Jan. 21, updated Jan. 13, is calling for “likely below” normal outlook for temperature and “likely above” outlook for precipitation. The March-April- May seasonal outlook for the upper Midwest is leaning above normal outlook for both temperature and precipitation.

The 2024 Pesticide Data Program (PDP) Annual Summary has been released by USDA and reports that more than 99 percent of the fruits and vegetables tested had pesticide residues below benchmark levels established by the U.S. EPA. Testing in 2024 was conducted on 9,872 samples of 19 different commodities of fresh and processed fruits and vegetables, nuts and fish. USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service partners with cooperating state agencies, such as the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources, to collect and analyze pesticide residue levels on the selected food commodities.

According to the study, conducted on an annual basis by USDA and EPA, 42.3 percent of the samples tested had no detectable pesticide residue. Commodities that did not have any samples exceeding the established tolerances included almonds, apples, canned pumpkin, frozen blackberries, fresh/frozen pineapples, frozen sweet corn, head lettuce, leaf lettuce, onion, orange, potatoes and salmon.

USDA tests a wide variety of do-

WEEKLY AG  
UPDATE

BY NED BIRKEY  
MSU EXTENSION EDUCATOR EMERITUS  
SPARTAN AG

mestic and imported foods, with a strong focus on foods that are consumed by infants and children. EPA relies on PDP data to conduct dietary risk assessments and to ensure that any pesticide residues in foods remain at or below levels that EPA has set. The data also provides regulators, farmers, processors, manufacturers, consumers and scientists with important insights into the actual levels of pesticide residues found on widely consumed foods.

The annual pesticide residue results are reported to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and EPA in monthly reports as testing takes place throughout the year. FDA and EPA are immediately notified if a PDP test discovers residue levels that could pose a public safety concern. Out of those 76 samples, 12 were domestically produced, while 64 were imported produce including avocados, fresh blackberries, cherry tomatoes, cucumbers, fresh sweet corn, and tomatillos (Mexican husk tomato), which accounted for nearly 50 percent of all samples exceeding thresholds.

The 2024 data and summary can be found on the Pesticide Data Program page at the AMS website. Inquiries may be addressed to the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service, Science and Technology Program, Monitoring Programs Division by email at [www.amsmpo.data@usda.gov](mailto:www.amsmpo.data@usda.gov).

(Weekly Ag continued on page 13)

  
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# Illinois bill established 'One Health' approach to zoonotic diseases

By **TIM ALEXANDER**  
Illinois Correspondent

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. - Of interest to livestock and poultry producers: After taking effect on Jan. 1, Illinois State Senate Bill 291 established a statewide "One Health Commission" within the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) to address proactive strategies for the prevention of zoonotic diseases.

According to an IDPH news release, a "One Health" approach refers to the recognition that human health is interconnected with the health of animal populations and the environment. The approach covers zoonotic diseases (which can be transmitted from animals to humans) such as avian influenza, as well as those carried by insects (including Lyme disease and West Nile virus), antimicrobial resistance and other health concerns.

The new commission will promote interdisciplinary communication and collaboration among doctors, veterinarians, other medical and scientific experts, and state agencies to develop a unified approach to preventing and containing outbreaks at state and local levels. It will be co-chaired by the director of IDPH and the president of the University of Illinois System, or

their designees.

"The One Health Commission includes the Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA) as a commission member," said Jennifer Tirey, executive director of the Illinois Pork Producers Association. "As a partner with IDOA I know they will be in contact with us if any livestock-related issues arise."

The pork industry is in full support of the One Health movement. The National Pork Board (NPB) said the One Health approach embodies their We Care Ethical Principles, which include food safety, animal well-being, our people, public health, environment and community.

"The One Health approach is vital in meeting the growing market demand for pork. As consumers become more conscientious about the food they consume, there is a heightened focus on food safety, animal welfare and environmental sustainability," according to Dr. Heather Fowler, NPB director of producer and public health.

Acknowledging the interconnected nature of human, animal and environmental health, State Senator and bill co-sponsor Julie Morrison said the new law was designed to enhance coordination among health care pro-

viders, veterinary professionals and environmental specialists in addressing Illinois' public health concerns.

"Recent events have demonstrated the clear connection between animal and human health – from COVID-19 to the latest bird flu cases," Morrison (D-Lake Forest) said in a news release. "Cross-disciplinary collaboration will enable the state to respond more effectively to complicated health threats."

Morrison said the commission will work closely with state agencies to recommend best practices to promote interdisciplinary communication, establish methods for the response to and recovery from disease outbreaks in animals and humans and develop ways to monitor emerging health threats, among other responsibilities. The commission will submit a report of recommendations to the governor and General Assembly by Jan. 1, 2027.

Research shows integrating expertise across disciplines helps achieve better health outcomes for all living things, according to Morrison. "This law dismantles the barriers that currently separate human, animal and environmental health sectors," she said. "Implementing a One Health framework enables us to leverage the expertise of top professionals across these fields, al-

lowing for more proactive strategies in protecting public health."

According to the text of the bill, Illinois' One Health Commission will be composed of the directors of the IDPH, IDOA, the U of I System, Illinois EPA, Illinois Emergency Management Agency, Homeland Security, Department of Natural Resources, Illinois Housing Development Authority, Illinois Department of Transportation and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity; four One Health experts from the academic or educational community; two physicians licensed in all medical branches in Illinois with at least one an expert in epidemiology or infectious disease surveillance; two veterinarians, and one member who represents a "safety net medical facility" and who is also a One Health expert. Members will be appointed to four-year terms, and will serve without compensation other than reimbursement for expenses associated with their service.

The commission will provide updated recommendations for public policy regarding zoonotic disease outbreaks and other health crises every two years following the release of their original recommendations due in 2027, according to the text of the bill.

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## Weekly Ag

FROM PAGE 12

Corn contest yields bring up a question: do farmers want the highest yield or a profitable yield?

An Ohio farmer recorded 347 bushels of corn in the 2025 National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) yield contest. Don Stall, of Charlotte, Mich., won the national contest in 2018 with 476.91 bushels per acre and also recorded 122 bushels of soybeans in the Michigan soybean contest.

Both contests only measure yields on a very small acreage. Pouring inputs for a contest isn't the same as managing thousands of acres. Former corn yield record holder Frances Childs, at a meeting at Cabela's in Dundee, Mich., said he wants corn plants looking like "soldiers in a row" so that even a rabbit would have to run to the end of the row to get to the next row. Kip Cullers, former soybean world record holder, at a different meeting at Cabela's said he wants soybeans to emerge within 18 hours for a uniform stand. "Runt" plants, like runt pigs, never catch up and take nutrients and water away from viable plants. Several years of variable nitrogen rate studies have never shown that the highest rate of N resulted in the highest corn yield. The same was true of soybean seeding rate studies, as soybeans will compensate for a lower, but uniform stand with more branching and pods. There are definitely things farmers can learn from either entering a contest or listening to what top yielders do and don't do. Reading about David Hula, the 2025 NCGA national champion, at 572.2589, he mentions several agronomic practices that he may adapt to his regular production practices.



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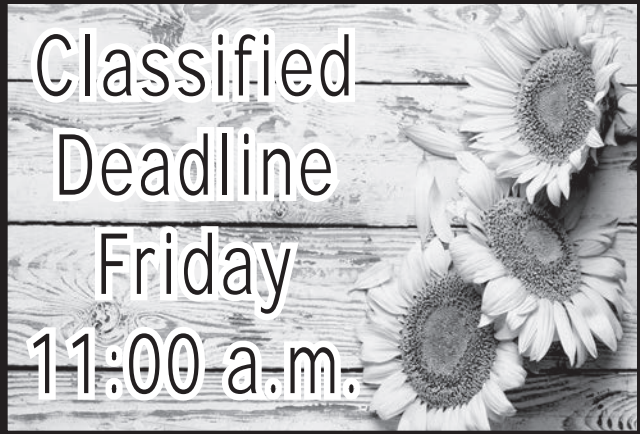
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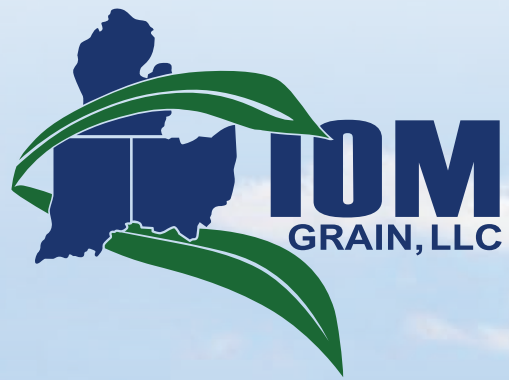


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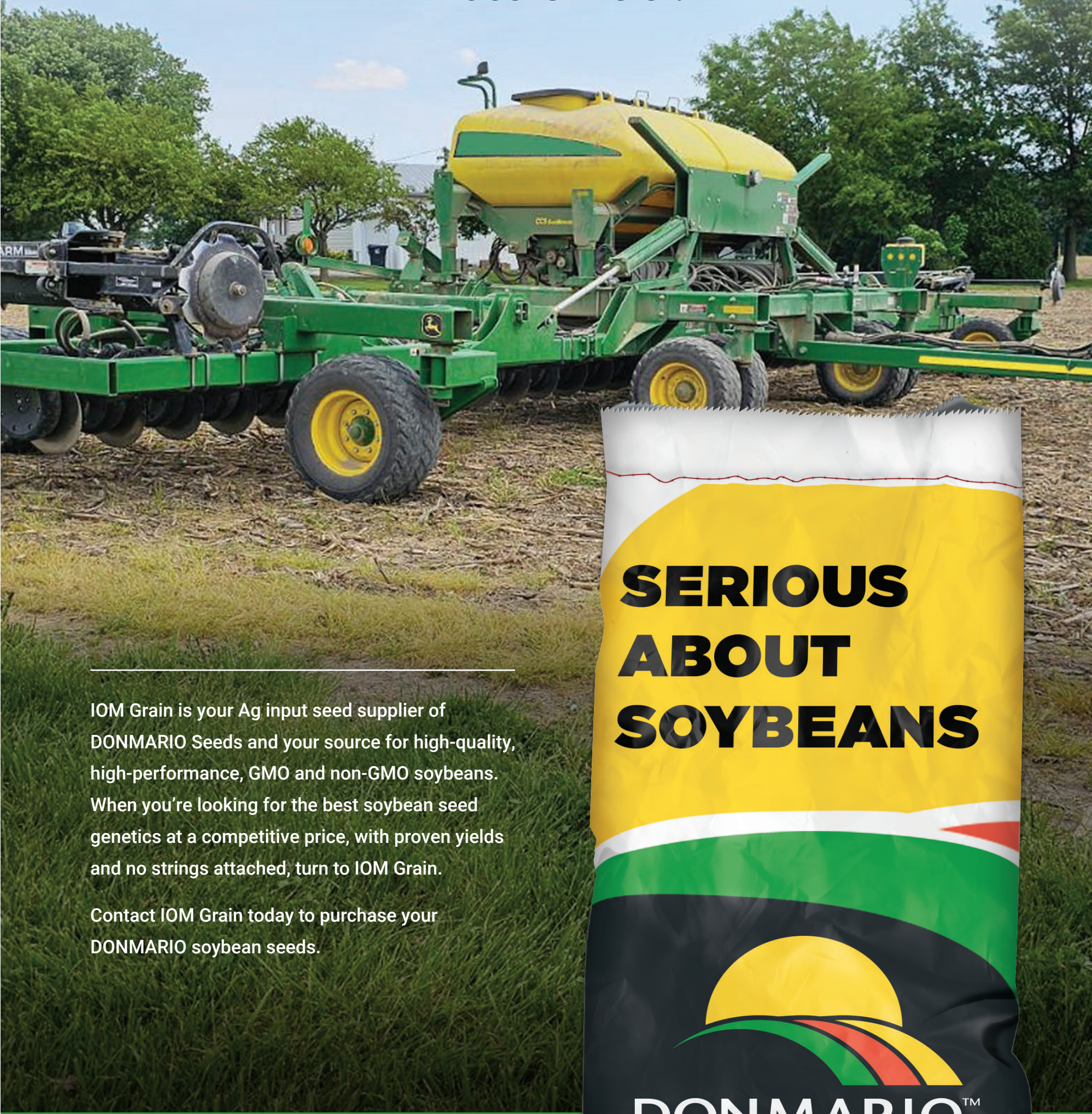


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# Tennessee home to America's only freshwater pearl farm

By DOUG GRAVES  
Ohio Correspondent

CAMDEN, Tenn. – For thousands of years, pearls have been a prized gemstone used to craft jewelry and other adornments. Pearls are primarily cultivated in China. North America has just one freshwater pearl farm that cultivates the shiny objects. It's the Tennessee River Freshwater Pearl Farm and it's at Kentucky Lake in western Tennessee.

Along the mossy rocks in Camden, one will spot a small flatbed boat anchored in shallow water. That boat is used to harvest beautiful pearls from the Tennessee River from mussels in the bay of Birdsong Resort, Marina and Campground.

Tennessee's freshwater pearl and mussel shell industry began with the outbreak of a "pearl rush" on the

Clinch River in eastern Tennessee just before the turn of the 20th century. The period from 1895 to 1936 was the start of Tennessee's prominence as one of the nation's leading states in pearl marketing and production.

The profitable business lasted from the 1940s to the 2000s. During its heyday, from the 1960s to the 1990s, Tennessee's commercial mussel shell business employed about 2,000 people and provided nearly \$50 million in state revenue. By 2020, though, the pearl industry waned drastically.

According to Bob Keast, owner of the farm and resort since the early 1960s, mussel fishing as an industry was booming in Kentucky Lake as shells of the mollusks were fished for and used to create garment buttons.

This type of fishing is known as brailling. A boat drags hooks along the waterbed and the mussels grab onto them as they pass. Fishermen were after the shells themselves as pearls had not come into play at this time.

In the late 1970s, the Keast family was approached by John Latendresse, who married a Japanese woman, Chessy, right after World War II and brought her to Camden. The couple had a unique aspiration to produce pearls from the freshwater mollusks that are abundant in many bodies throughout North America, so they purchased the farm in 1979.

Despite the presence of this large



**Above:** John Nerren holds freshly harvested mussels from the Tennessee River Freshwater Pearl Farm. (Will Darnall photo)



**Above:** The Tennessee River Freshwater Pearl Farm is the only operation of its kind in North America. (photo submitted)

mussel industry, culturing pearls with the native mussels was never done, as both the meat and pearl were often seen as just a natural by-product and discarded. That is, until the Latendresses discovered that the water located in the bay of Birdsong Creek met all the requirements to start a pearl farm. Chessy used the culturing techniques she learned in Japan and applied those in the waters around Camden.

Keast said these exact methods

are still in use today, and they closely resemble those used in larger salt-water operations.

Pearls naturally form as a byproduct of oysters and mussels after an irritant material, such as a small minnow, parasite, or even a piece of sand, gets trapped inside the shell. When this happens, the mollusks begin to produce a substance called nacre that encapsulates the irritant,

(Pearls continued page 2B)

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# Pearls

FROM PAGE 1B

protecting the inside shell from possible damage while also creating a beautiful shiny object.

“We implant a piece of foreign material into the mollusk and that mimics the material needed to begin the pear creation process,” Keast said. “We then we put it in a net, and we hang the net off our PVC water pipes here at Birdsong. And then we wait six or eight years, and it grows a pearl.”

John Nerren, known as “Diver John,” has worked at the Tennessee River Freshwater Pearl Farm since the early 1980s. Nerren oversees this stage of the process. At one point he was just one of about 80 divers who collected mussels for the farm.

“Diving for mussels in Kentucky Lake comes with many challenges, such as low visibility due to lake conditions and the water depth,” Nerren said.

Because he’s been a part of this operation since its beginnings, Nerren has seen it evolve over the years. He remembers a time when the farm started to utilize multiple nearby laboratories to create the optimal conditions for pearl growth.

“We had out microscopes and we had our pH testing kids,” he said. “We could control the flow of the water in the laboratory with pumps and all kinds of special devices. It was state-of-the-art back in the day.”

Today, Nerren said there is no longer use for these specialty built labo-



**Above:** Shown are freshly harvested mussels in a culturing net made by John Nerren. (photo submitted)

ratories as the farm slowly started to scale back operations about 20 years ago.

After John Latendresse died in 1979, Keast bought the farm in hopes of preserving the location’s unique history. They still cultivate pearls, just at a lower rate than in previous years when the farm focused on exports. The process is now used to show visitors of the Tennessee River Freshwater Pearl Farm Museum (located on the resort grounds) how the gems are made.

The museum has an assortment of items related to the site’s history and mussel farming.

Susan Lewis, who has been in charge of the museum since its opening, can be found doing a variety of tasks on a typical day, from explaining the history of mussel farming in the region to grading imported and locally grown pears to be used for crafting jewelry.

The bay where the pearls are grown may seem small, but Lewis said its rich history draws in visitors.

“They’re in here shopping and trying to learn about the freshwater mussel and the pearl farm, and it’s a lot of information, but I think the people are hungry for that,” Lewis said.



**Above:** The Tennessee River Freshwater Pearl Museum has an assortment of items related to the site’s history and mussel farming. (Will Darnall photo)

# Southwestern Illinois Commercial Tree Fruit School scheduled for Feb. 12

HARDIN, Ill. – Growing fruit on trees is a rewarding experience, but it comes with challenges. From pests and disease to climate stress or soil issues, a single mistake can set back growth. Growers can get current research-based information to help their tree fruits thrive at the Southwestern Illinois Commercial Tree Fruit School on Feb. 12 in Hardin.

This year’s program will cover topics on current trends in insect and disease management, including peach and apple diseases updates from Professor and Faculty Extension Specialist Mohammad Babadoost, integrated pest management in fruit trees with Specialty Crops Entomologist Kacie Athey, and the weather hazard forecast project from Illinois State Climatologist Trent Ford. Industry representatives will also be on hand to talk about their

latest products and services. The 2026 Southwestern Illinois Commercial Tree Fruit School will take be at the Barefoot Restaurant, 106 S Water St., Hardin, IL 62047. There will be no afternoon presentations, and the program will conclude after lunch. All registration fees include lunch and one copy of the Midwest Fruit Pest Management Guide.

For more information or to register, visit [go.illinois.edu/TreeFruitSchool](http://go.illinois.edu/TreeFruitSchool). Attendance is \$35 per person for advanced registration by Feb. 4. Registration after Feb. 4 or at the door is \$50 per person. If you have questions or if you will need a reasonable accommodation to participate in this program, please contact Horticulture Educator Ken Johnson. Early requests are strongly encouraged to allow sufficient time to meet access needs.

# Indiana Pork awards \$100 gift cards to 50 teachers in state

INDIANAPOLIS – Indiana Pork is reinforcing its commitment to education and local communities by awarding 50 Indiana teachers with \$100 gift cards, totaling \$5,000 in support for classrooms across the state. The initiative recognizes educators who go above and beyond to positively impact the lives of Hoosier students.

Teachers were nominated by community members, students, administrators and fellow educators in recognition of their dedication, passion and influence in the classroom.

“Teachers play a critical role in shaping the future of our state, and we see firsthand the commitment they bring to their students every day,” said Jeanette Merritt, director of communications for Indiana Pork. “These gift cards are a small way to say thank you and help offset the out-of-pocket costs

many educators face when providing supplies and resources for their classrooms.”

Educators across Indiana often spend their own money to ensure students have what they need to succeed. By helping ease that financial burden, Indiana Pork hopes to show appreciation for teachers while supporting a positive and effective learning environment.

“Our teachers consistently step up for their students, often without recognition,” Merritt added. “Indiana Pork is proud to support educators who are making a lasting difference and preparing the next generation of Hoosiers.”

A complete list of winners can be found at [www.indianapork.org/](http://www.indianapork.org/)

Indiana Pork represents Indiana’s nearly 2,200 pig farmers.



**Above:** In 1979, the pearl was designated as Tennessee’s state gem. In the Tennessee River Freshwater Museum, visitors can see a variety of pearls that were extracted from the Tennessee River. Shown is a tray of freshwater bead-nucleated cultured pearls harvested at the Birdsong Creek pearl farm. (photo submitted)

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# POET plans to boost its bioethanol production capacity at Indiana plant

By DOUG SCHMITZ  
Iowa Correspondent

SHELBYVILLE, Ind. – POET, LLC, recently announced plans to expand its POET Bioprocessing-Shelbyville, Ind., plant, which officials said will boost bioethanol production capacity from 98 million gallons to 193 million gallons.

Erin Branick, POET media manager, told Farm World the upgrades will also double the facility’s dried distillers grains and corn oil output, increase local grain demand for area farmers, and add 20 jobs.

“POET’s team has done our due diligence by monitoring long-term market trends and evaluating each of our Indiana facilities,” she said regarding the reason for the expansion. “POET Bioprocessing-Shelbyville is well-suited for an expansion of this size, and the Shelbyville community has been supportive of the facility. The expansion will help POET meet the growing demand for biofuel and bioproducts.”

She said this expansion reflects POET’s confidence in the future of the industry: “Our main goals are to stay ahead of growing biofuel and bioproduct demand, and continue to grow grain markets for local farmers,” adding that the expansion is projected to cost \$203 million.

Jeff Lautt, POET president and chief operating officer, said, “By growing this facility, we’re strengthening markets for local farmers, creating good-paying rural jobs, and ensuring we can meet the growing global demand for our suite of bioproducts.”

As farmers face low commodity prices,

he said access to stable domestic markets for grain is essential. He added this expansion will position POET Bioprocessing-Shelbyville – which began operations in 2020 – and area farmers to access new markets and emerging opportunities, including carbon capture, feed products, and growing demand for E15 fuel across the U.S.

“New biofuel markets are a win for consumers, farmers and domestic energy,” he said. “POET is positioned to meet rising demand for biofuels and bioproducts, while delivering real economic benefits to rural America.”

Jason Lucas, POET Bioprocessing-Shelbyville general manager, said, “The hard work and dedication of the POET team are what make this kind of growth possible. We’re proud of the work we do and grateful for the support of this community, and we look forward to continue investing and delivering value for many years to come.”

Founded in 1987 and headquartered in Sioux Falls, POET operates 34 bioprocessing facilities in eight states – Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio and South Dakota – and employs more than 2,400 team members.

“POET is dedicated to strengthening America’s energy and the agricultural future,” Lautt said. “This expansion will play an important role as we work to grow the global bioeconomy from right here in the Heartland.”

Construction will begin in March 2026 and is expected to be completed in the fourth quarter of 2027, officials said.

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# U of I entomologist offers ‘pest year’ review

By **TIM ALEXANDER**  
Illinois Correspondent

PEORIA, Ill. – Grape colaspis and corn leaf aphid outbreaks in parts of Illinois were among the top crop pests of the 2025 growing season, causing plant injury and, in some cases, loss of yield production. The good news: because the insects, especially colaspis, are sporadic in Illinois, history suggests that issues in 2025 do not necessarily translate to another big year for the pests in 2026.

This is according to Dr. Nick Seiter, assistant professor and field crop entomologist for the University of Illinois Extension, who noted that a significant outbreak of colaspis, which resemble bean leaf beetles in size and shape but have stripes along the back, had not been seen in Illinois since 2018. Speaking to a group at



**Above:** Dr. Nick Seiter, U of I entomologist, led a seminar on insect management in corn and soybeans at the Greater Peoria Farm Show in December. Seiter told farmers that grape colaspis made a return to corn fields in 2025, but the pest won't necessarily be an issue this year. (T. Alexander photo)

the Greater Peoria Farm Show in December, Seiter explained that grub-like grape colaspis is most commonly found in elevated areas of crop fields, and can be found in corn-after-soybean or even soybean-after-soybean rotations.

“We often see (colaspis) in corn grown in rotation with soybeans or another legume. They feed on the root hair system as it is developing, and they do so in such a way that interferes with nutrient uptake,” said Seiter, adding that for this reason farmers may initially confuse the damage incurred from colaspis with symptoms of a nutrient deficiency.

“Particularly with phosphorus and potassium, where you get the purpling and yellowing of the leaves. That’s kind of the first indication you have a problem, where they shouldn’t really be showing up based on the fertility profile of that field,” he added.

Seiter last reported on grape colaspis in an April 2019 paper, “Grape Colaspis in Corn and Soybean: a Pre-Season Primer.” (Department of Crop Sciences, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign). He noted that colaspis larvae, which feed below ground and resemble tiny white grubs, are responsible for plant injury. Plants may appear wilted, stunted, or as if they have a nutrient deficiency from above the soil surface. The damage is often patchy and most pronounced on high or well-drained portions of a field. Uprooting damaged plants will reveal the larvae, which resemble white grubs, though smaller.

While plants will usually overcome initial larvae damage, severe feeding can kill plants and reduce stands.

Because egg laying occurs in soybean, alfalfa and other legumes, the damage can occur in rotated corn or continuous soybean.

“The severity of damage can be spotty; it can kill or stunt a plant. Usually where we see this in fields are the higher, better-drained portions of a field and (the damage) can sometimes result in a partial re-plant. Very infrequently would you see colaspis wreck an entire field,” Seiter said, adding that the most colaspis-infected field he ever “walked” was in the Blue Mound-Mt. Auburn area of south central Illinois last summer. “It was still spotty in that field, but the spots that were affected probably took up around half the field itself. It was a pretty serious situation with some stand loss.”

The geography in Illinois regarding grape colaspis seems to be restricted thus far to a “belt” across south-central Illinois from around Springfield toward Terre Haute, Ind., according to Seiter. The bug expert also assured the Peoria farmers that just because grape colaspis made a return in 2025, there is no particular reason to think pressure from the pest will return or increase in 2026. “It’s very sporadic, and we will kind of see ‘outbreak years’ when we have the right combination of environmental conditions, but it happens infrequently enough it’s kind of hard to even determine what those conditions are,” he said. “2018 was the first time it had been seen in (large numbers) for 10 or 12 years prior, though we see some of the beetles every year. If you walk bean fields you see it is never completely gone.”

Seiter said Illinois farmers also saw a continuance of pressure from



**Above:** Grape colaspis photo provided by U of I

corn leaf aphid on certain hybrids in 2025, though the insects’ numbers were not as great as in 2024. “In 2024 we had a rather large outbreak, even causing some yield loss in fields, which is something we really don’t see very often with that insect,” he said.

“In 2024 we were seeing differences from hybrid to hybrid and variety to variety. Though in 2025 we did not see widespread outbreaks of the insect, we got reports that some of those hybrids that were sensitive in 2024 were sensitive again in 2025 to that aphid.”

Still, with proper hybrid management and selection farmers should not expect to see increased pressure from corn leaf aphid in 2026, according to the entomologist. “Corn leaf aphid is even more sporadic than grape colaspis,” said Seiter, who can be reached with questions at nseiter@illinois.edu.

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# OSU leads efforts to protect bee population, diversity

By DOUG GRAVES  
Ohio Correspondent

COLUMBUS, Ohio – The Ohio Biodiversity Conservation Partnership (OBCP) has made significant strides in preserving the state's bee population through its ongoing Ohio Bee Survey. Now entering its fifth year, the survey has already identified more than 330 species of bees in Ohio, including nearly 50 specialist species.

The survey aims to identify and understand the ecological roles of bees, particularly in relation to pollination and biodiversity conservation.

The OBCP, founded in 2010 at Ohio State University, has become a vital resource for wildlife conservation efforts across the state.

Karen Goodell, a professor at Ohio State Newark and a member of OBCP, said the survey provides key insights into how pollinators support crop production and what measures are needed to help protect them.

"We were able to look at some species-specific patterns," Goodell said. "We found where certain types of bees with particular traits that might make them more vulnerable and may lead them to need a more specialized diet."

"Specialist bees have narrow diets, restricting their pollen collection to a few plant species, and often exhibit specific habitat associations, too. We've collected a ton of ecological data over the last few years about these rare species. Now we know where they occur and have a better understanding of their habit requirements."

As part of the survey, 155 collection kits were distributed to collectors across Ohio. These collectors trapped specimens once a week using bee bowls. Researchers, students, division employees and even "community scientists" were among those contributing to OBCP's work.

The findings from the survey can guide farmers and conservation efforts to create habitats that support bee populations, ultimately benefiting food production and biodiversity. This survey is a vital tool for understanding and protecting Ohio's pollinators, ensuring the health of the agricultural ecosystems.

"There are certain things we won't be able to grow and produce commercially without adequate pollinators," Goodell added. "If something happens to our honeybees, we need to have a backup. We need to have some assurance."

One method of data collection for the bee survey consisted of trapping bees in passive water traps. The traps often catch other insects as well, Goodell said.

"We call that 'bycatch,'" she said. "Flies, butterflies, spiders, ants – we saved all those specimens, which have become sources for undergraduate projects."

One of those projects provided a valuable update to state hoverfly species counts.

"Hoverflies are considered pollinators and beneficial insects," Goodell said. "We've now completed the largest hoverfly survey of Ohio. Prior to this, the most recent one was done 100 years ago."

"Many of the bee specimens are collected by volunteers with an interest in science. There are quite a lot of people

interested in pollinators in Ohio. Many retirees who are looking to do something engaging and helpful often get involved. What we're doing is special. We are a land-grant university, and this is exactly what we're supposed to be doing – conducting research that benefits the citizens of Ohio."

And not just bees. OBCPs knowledge base is wide-ranging.

"We're talking about insects to vertebrates, like rattlesnakes, hellbenders and more," said OBCP Director H. Lisle Gibbs. "The state draws on our expertise, and we move forward with research."

Each year, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service distributes funding to each state to support animal conservation through the State Wildlife Grant Program. Ohio receives about \$3 million annually, and roughly one-third goes to OBCP.

"We have Ohio State faculty working closely with the Ohio Division of Wildlife," added Gibbs, who has been at the helm of OBCP since its inception. "We provide scientific research to help them do their job, which is to protect the biodiversity of the state."

"In addition to research, we're doing practical things here. We're training students who can move into jobs at the division. And the funding we receive covers all components of research, so it supports graduate and undergraduate students, as well as postdoctoral fellows at the university."

OBCP is a collaboration between Ohio State's Department of Evolution, Ecology and Organismal Biology and the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences' School of Environment and Natural Resources.



Above: The hoverfly is one of approximately 330 species of bees collected in the latest OBCP survey. (courtesy of Ohio State University)

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- Sukup Dryer Equip. LOCATED AT 10238 1 1/2 Rd. LeRoy MI. Calhoun Co.
- JD 6000 Receiver
- JD 2630 Screen
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- Ag Pro Generator, PTO, 15 K
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Potential Building Sites • Country Home

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WHITLEY CO, INDIANA



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- 2014 McCormick TTX230 MFWD tractor
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- 2001 JD 9550 2WD combine
- JD 625F HydraFlex 25' platform
- Unverferth HT25 head cart
- JD 693 corn head
- J&M 755 gravity wagon
- J&M 755 gravity wagon
- J&M 555 gravity wagon
- J&M 555 gravity wagon
- Sudenga OX1071 swing away auger
- AGI VRX grain vac
- 1979 IH 1854 grain truck

TILLAGE:

- Salford Halo HSD, 20', spade hitch
- Salford 550-32 field cultivator
- Case IH 870 Ecolo-Tiger disc ripper

PLANTER, SPRAYER, APPLICATOR, FERTILIZER SPREADER & SEED TENDER:

- Kinze 3600 12/24 bulk fill planter
- 2024 Hardi Commander 45 pull type sprayer
- 2014 Kongskilde F3450 applicator
- Loftness FS800 fertilizer spreader
- Unverferth Seed Runner 3955XL

TRACK SKID STEER & BACKHOE:

- New Holland C245 track skid steer
- Case 580C extendahoe 2WD

MISCELLANEOUS FARM SUPPORT ITEMS:

- Bush Hog 12215 flex wing mower
- Pair of Firestone 30.5L-32 tires
- Pair of Firestone 16.9-26 tires

INSPECTION DATES:

Thurs., Feb. 19th  
11am- 4:30pm  
Sat., Feb. 21st  
9am - 4:30pm

EQUIPMENT LOCATION:

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VIRTUAL ONLINE-ONLY AUCTION

Tuesday, FEBRUARY 24TH, 2026 AT 10AM ET  
Tractors • Harvest Equipment & Grain Truck • Tillage • Planter • Sprayer & More

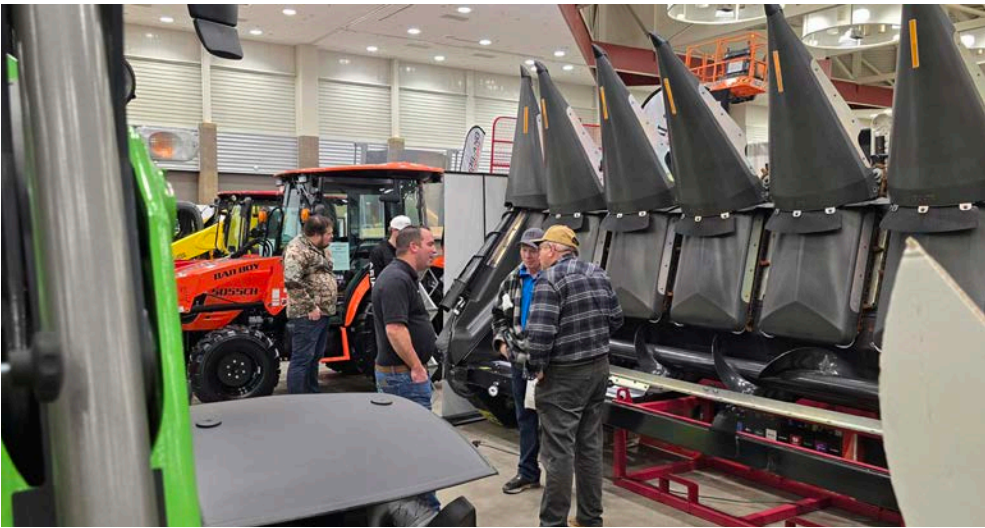
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# Scenes from Fort Wayne Farm Show

The 37th edition of the Fort Wayne Farm Show was held Jan. 13-15 at the Allen County War Memorial Coliseum in Fort Wayne, Ind. It brought thousands of visitors and 415 vendors together. Forty-nine of the vendors were new to the event this year. For more information on next year's show visit tradexplos.com. Photos by Leondia Walchle





# Metzger Auction Calendar

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February 1, 2026  
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AUCTION MANAGER: TIM HOLMES • 260-580-5473 **BidMetzger.com**

**NATIVE AMERICAN ARTIFACT ONLINE AUCTION!**

February 2, 2026  
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**Metzger** **Thursday, January 29, 2026**  
Real Estate • Auctions • Appraisals Located in: Elkhart, IN 46514  
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**Online Real Estate Auction!**  
**3 BR, 1.5 Bath Home!**  
Online Auction:  
**Tuesday, February 3rd at 6:30 pm**  
Property Address:  
535 E. Center Street, Warsaw, IN 46580

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**Equipment & Vehicle ONLINE SIMULCAST AUCTION!**

Vehicles - Tractors - Farm & Livestock Equipment - Trailers - Boats - ATVs & More!

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**February 6, 2026**  
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# 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary **Antique & Collectible AUCTION**

Located at the Kraft Auction Facility - 48 N 450 E • Valparaiso, IN 46383

**• Weekend #2 •**  
**January 29<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup>, 31<sup>st</sup> & February 1<sup>st</sup>**  
**Auction Preview: January 27<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup> 9am-5pm**  
**and each auction day starting at 8am**

## Day 1 January 29<sup>th</sup> - 10am CST Pop Culture and Sports Memorabilia Auction

700+ Lots Including: Sci-Fi Collectibles; Vintage and Modern Collectible Toys; Barbies; Legos and more!



Terms: Cash, all major forms of credit cards, or good check with letter of credit. 3% service fee for credit cards. 7% Indiana sales tax. Out of state taxes may apply to online buyers. Buyer's premium of 10% onsite, 15% phone and absentee, and 20% online. ALL VEHICLES AND MOTORCYCLES HAVE A REDUCED ONLINE BUYERS PREMIUM OF 15% Register with a positive ID. Settlement the day of the sale. Not responsible for accidents or items after being sold. Information announced on the day of sale takes precedence over printed material. \*Due to the large amount of fraud related buyer's of gold, silver, fine jewelry and watches we require certified funds from unknown buyers with a buying history from our company. For online buyers we may hold purchases until payment has cleared and verified, unless payment is made by wire transfer and will be released immediately.\*

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 Jonathan Kraft • IN-AU10500173  
 Del Harper • AU01028908  
 John Beechy • AU10900099  
 Jaron Miller • AU11300004  
 Kyle Stepnoski • AU11400033  
 Connor Wolfe • AU12300004  
 Mason Chorzempa • AU12300012  
 219-973-9240  
 info@kraftauctions.com

## Day 2 January 30<sup>th</sup> - 10am CST Premier Antique and Vintage Toy Auction

1150+ Lots of Toys Including: Outstanding Collection of 300+ Early Pressed Steel Trucks including Buddy L, Keystone, Structo, Cor-Cor, Original Hoenes Viking, Sturditoy, Dayton, Kingsbury, Steelcraft, and More



## Day 3 January 31<sup>st</sup> - 9:30am CST Collector Car, Vintage Motorcycle and Premier Pedal Car Auction

175+ Premier Pedal Cars Including: Electric Bugatti Child's Car; American National; Steelcraft; Garton; Gendron; Murray; Line Bros.; 200+ Lots of Advertising, Race and Automotive Memorabilia; 200+ Lots of Collector Cars and Motorcycles "115+ Lots at No Reserve" and more!



## Day 4 February 1<sup>st</sup> - 10am CST Premier Vintage Advertising and Memorabilia Auction

1250+ Lots to Be Offered: 500+ Antique, Vintage and Modern Signs to be offered including Gas and Oil, Country Store, Soda Pop, Beer, Neons, Boat, Farm, Outdoor, Automotive and more!





# Indiana DNR releases Fish of the Year program winners for 2025

The Indiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Fish of the Year program (FOTY), recognizes anglers who have caught the longest fish of each species DNR tracks in the year.

For 2025, Steven Kellett, a Linton (Greene County) dentist, set a new FOTY record with 17 FOTY winning catches, eclipsing the mark of 15 FOTY winning catches set by Liu He of West Lafayette in 2022. The Kellett name also appears five more times on the 2025 FOTY list, as Landon, Steven's 9-year-old son, caught five winning fish.

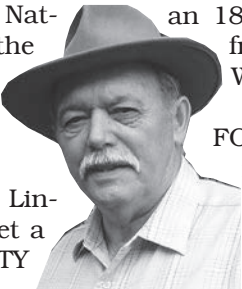
The elder Kellett said fishing with his son makes him think back to his childhood and helps him shape his son's future.

"Spending father/son time away from the everyday stresses of life means everything to me," Steven Kellett said. "I have awesome memories fishing with my dad and grandfather, and I want Landon to have some of the same experiences that I did."

"A lot of kids these days do not get to experience the outdoors, living in our tech driven culture. When I'm not working or at a sporting event, we make an effort to go fishing! These memories will last a lifetime!"

Steven's FOTY catches for species most commonly pursued by anglers included a 25.5 inch channel catfish he caught at Goose Pond Fish & Wildlife Area, a 22.25 inch saugeye from the Whitewater River in Franklin, and a 21.5 inch brown trout from a private pond in Greene County.

The largest of Landon's catches were a 28 inch black buffalo from the Wabash River in Sullivan County and



SPAULDING OUTDOORS  
By Jack Spaulding

an 18.5 inch shorthead redhorse from the Tippecanoe River in White County.

The elder Kellett said the FOTY program serves as extra motivation to fish for both he and his son.

"The FOTY competition offers a unique opportunity to either specialize in a single species or diversify into multiple," he said. "I enjoy teaching my son to identify different species of fish and learn what is around us."

"We are both goal driven, and we like to log our catches, not only to send in for the competition, but to chart trends, locations, baits, and our own personal bests. This helps us find fish in the future, too."

To learn more about DNR's FOTY and Record Fish programs, see on.IN.gov/recordfish.

Floyd County resident Justin Brown caught a record-setting longnose gar on the Ohio River on Dec. 30 of last year, on a warm winter afternoon.

The fish weighed 23 pounds, 12.2 ounces, beating the previous record from 2008 by almost a pound and a half. The previous record fish was caught from the White River. Brown caught his gar from a boat using a jigging spoon.

All three of Indiana's gar records have now been broken in the past three years – the shortnose gar record was set in 2025, and the spotted gar record was set in 2024.

Longnose gar is one of Indiana's most common gar species. It is found throughout the state, and the largest longnose

(Spaulding continued on page 19B)

## SESSION #2 OF RALPH "PETE" CHRISTIANSEN

55+ Yr Toy Tractor, Case Knife Collection, Trains & Western  
Huber Auction Group, LLC

LIVE AUCTION WITH ONLINE BIDDING @ BIDHUBER.COM  
AUCTIONS STARTS @ 9:00 A.M. EDT ON SAT., JAN. 31, 2026

Preview Date/Time Preview Friday January 30 from 12:00 (Noon) -5:00 pm  
Local Pick Up on Monday February 2, 2026 from 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. NO SUNDAY PICK UP,  
NO ONLINE PURCHASES CAN BE PICKED UP ON 1-31-26. If a buyer wants shipping please  
respond to the email/text you are sent after the auction is over this is the only way to guarantee your shipping request is honored.

LOCATION: 230 E OSAGE STREET, GREENFIELD, IN 46140

55+ Year Collection of Ralph "Pete" Christiansen Premier Farm Toy & Collectible Knife Auction – A Midwest Treasure Trove! Attention collectors, enthusiasts, and nostalgia seekers! This exceptional live/simulcast auction presents an extraordinary collection spanning decades of American agricultural heritage and craftsmanship. Whether you're a serious collector or just starting out, this auction offers something special for everyone. Vintage Die-Cast Farm Tractors – Over 500 Pieces! An incredible assembly of ERTL, Scale Models, and SpecCast tractors featuring iconic brands: John Deere (Models 4020, 5020, 8640, and more), International Harvester (Farmall 806, 1086, 1466), Oliver (77, 1850, 1855, Super 88), Allis-Chalmers, Case, Massey Ferguson, White Farm Equipment from 1/64 to 1/16 scale—perfect for display or serious collecting! Premium Case XX Knife Collection – 200+ Pieces! An outstanding selection of Case XX pocket knives in various patterns: Trappers, Copperlocks, Russlock, Cheetah, Seahorse Whittlers, and more. Features rare bone handles in exotic colors (Rattlesnake, Copperhead, Jade, Amber, Tangerine, Caribbean Blue), limited editions numbered "1 of 2500" and "1 of 3000," special commemorative editions (John Deere, Harley Davidson, Orange County Choppers), and vintage models dating back decades. Many include original boxes. Also featuring Smith & Wesson, Schrade, Uncle Henry, Buck, and Rough Rider knives. Lionel & Model Trains – 100+ Pieces! Extensive collection of O-Gauge and HO-scale locomotives and cars: Lionel postwar and modern era (Southern Pacific, Erie Lackawanna, Pennsylvania, Alaska Railroad), MTH RailKing, K-Line, Industrial Rail, and more. Includes diesel locomotives, steam engines with tenders, passenger cars, freight cars, cabooses, plus accessories like illuminated stations, buildings, and track sections. Many with original boxes! Vintage Cap Guns & Western Memorabilia: Rare collectibles including Hubley, Nichols Stallion 45, Mattel Fanner 50, Gene Autry, Roy Rogers, Lone Ranger, and more. Original holsters, lunchboxes with thermoses, and authentic western collectibles. Additional Highlights: Vintage toy barns, farm implements, combines, crawlers, military collectibles (bayonets, helmets, ammunition displays—for display only), BB guns (Daisy Red Ryder), display cases, and more!

PERFECT FOR: Farm toy collectors, knife enthusiasts, train hobbyists, Midwest agricultural heritage lovers, gift-givers, and anyone passionate about American craftsmanship. Bid live or online! Don't miss this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to own premium pieces of Americana!  
We accept cash, good local check (NO Out of State checks), Mastercard, Visa and Discover, 10% bp for onsite bidders, if onsite bidders pay by credit card there will be an additional 4% added to invoice total, a flat 18% bp for all online buyers, all buyers charged 7% Indiana Sales Tax, all items sold as is.  
If you are tax exempt we must receive your completed ST-105 by 5:00 p.m. on Friday January 30, 2026. Complete and current form must be scanned and emailed to huber.enterprises@yahoo.com by above time and date. Screenshots and old forms are not acceptable. If forms are not received by the time and date above buyer will be charged sales tax. NO EXCEPTIONS!! Visit huberauctiongroup.com for more info and upcoming auctions. All announcements made on sale day take precedence over written material. Questions call the office at 317-468-3705 Or email huberauctiongroup@yahoo.com

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27<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CLARK COUNTY  
FFA CONSIGNMENT AUCTION  
SATURDAY FEBRUARY 14<sup>TH</sup>, 2026 @ 9:30

RECEIVING EQUIPMENT DAILY 9:00 A.M-6:00 P.M  
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VIEWING ONLY DAYS THE 12<sup>TH</sup> & 13<sup>TH</sup>

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# Books help us to get to know bats, squirrels, snakes

Books about critters and var-  
mints by various authors  
c.2025, various publishers,  
\$30-\$32, various page counts

You don't "do" varmints.  
You don't want to see  
them, you don't want to  
hear them, you don't want to  
know they're even around –  
but then again, you're a lit-  
tle curious. Why are we so  
squeamish about some ani-  
mals, and not others? Try these great  
books about the creatures that live on  
the edge and find out...

A couple months ago, bats were  
everywhere in stores, porches and  
decorations large and small, but did  
you know that real-life bats actually  
come in sizes ranging from tiny to hu-  
man-sized? That's just a sampling of  
what you'll read about in "The Genius  
Bat: The Secret Life of the Only Flying  
Mammal" by Yossi Yovel (St. Martin's  
Press, \$32).

Why do bats make so many people  
shudder? You'll wonder why, after you  
learn some truths, facts and myth-set-  
tlers about this truly fascinating ani-  
mal. If you love wildlife, missing this  
book might drive you batty.

Maybe you love them. Maybe you  
think they're annoying tree rodents. No  
matter how you see them, in "Squirrel:  
How a Backyard Forager Shapes Our



THE BOOKWORM SEZ  
Terri Schlichenmeyer

World" by Nancy Castaldo (Island  
Press, \$30) you'll learn about  
one of America's most familiar  
wild animals.

They're adorable, with  
their flicking little tails and  
their tiny paws – both of  
which they use to raid your  
bird feeder and ruin your  
garden. They're social media  
darlings. They're dinner for  
some people. They're ecolog-  
ical necessities for all of us:  
you can't get rid of them, nor would  
you really want to. Most of all, Cast-  
aldo says, squirrels as a species are  
stressed and they need us, so read on.

Roughly a third of humans in the  
world are afraid of the creatures that  
this third book is about. In "Slither:  
How Nature's Most Maligned Crea-  
tures Illuminate Our World" by Ste-  
phen S. Hall (Grand Central, \$30),  
you'll read about the snake in history,  
starting with the Garden of Eden. Was  
the Bible the reason snakes are feared  
and reviled? Is it because of their fangs  
and (possible) venom? Despite that  
many people are disgusted by them  
and monkeys are genetically terrified  
by them... why are snakes so fasci-  
nating? You'll see why, as author Hall  
takes readers on the ground, through  
the forest and sands. Snakes, as he  
shows, feature in mythology, cultural  
beliefs and many religions. You'll find  
them in art and in ancient tales, in  
the lab and in the zoo. They can mean  
paralyzing fear or deep respect, life or  
death, protection or fertility, punish-  
ment or medical cure. This book will  
thrill anyone with a snake fascina-  
tion, and it'll enlighten those who are  
ssssssssscared of snakes.

And if these three books aren't  
enough information or a deep-enough  
dive into those little-discussed, some-  
times creepy critters, head to your fa-  
vorite library or bookstore and ask for  
help. The staff there can help you find  
more on these creatures and other  
equally enthralling critters that crawl,  
walk, coil or build webs. You might  
not like them now, but reading books  
about them and learning more is the  
smart thing to do.



TELL THEM YOU SAW THEIR AD IN **FarmWorld**

# Appealing USDA wetland decisions

In past articles, we discussed  
USDA's "Swampbuster" and the  
relief that can be granted to a  
farmer that commits a wetland  
violation. This article will discuss  
when a farmer receives an unfav-  
orable wetland determination  
(i.e. NRCS declares an area a  
wetland and the farmer dis-  
agrees) and the appeal rights  
that are available to the farm-  
er to dispute the wetland de-  
termination.



Ag Law  
By John Schwarz

Many times, Swampbuster viola-  
tions start with a farmer clearing and/  
or tiling an area that has not been  
historically farmed and does not have  
a classification with the NRCS. In  
these instances, NRCS starts with a  
Preliminary Technical Determination  
(PTD). This consists of the NRCS per-  
forming an analysis as to whether the  
site meets the criteria to be labeled a  
wetland. If the area meets the crite-  
ria, then the farmer is issued a PTD  
stating that the area, at least prelimi-  
narily, is a wetland. If the farmer dis-  
agrees, a reconsideration request can  
be made. NRCS will schedule a field  
visit with the farmer to reconsider the  
technical decision. The purpose of this  
review is to gather additional informa-  
tion and discuss the facts relating to  
the PTD. If the PTD turns out to no  
longer be adverse to the farmer, the  
NRCS will issue a final determination  
(FTD) that, among other things, could  
find the area to be a non-wetland, or  
other designations that allow it to be  
farmed. If the determination remains  
adverse, the determination can be fur-  
ther reviewed and issued by the NRCS  
state conservationist.

If the NRCS state conservationist up-  
holds the adverse FTC and the farmer  
disagrees with the FTD, the farmer has  
additional appeal opportunities. The  
request must be submitted in writing  
to the appropriate agency within 30  
days of receipt of the FTD. It is critical  
that the 30-day deadline be adhered  
to. I've seen farmers lose their appeal  
rights by not seeking an appeal within  
the 30 day deadline. And, it never ceas-  
es to amaze me for people to receive an  
adverse FTD but wait until only a few  
days before the 30-day deadline to call  
me for help. Thus, giving immediate at-  
tention to an adverse FTD is critical.

While not quite an appeal, per se,  
mediation is available to the farmer  
after receiving an adverse FTD. Fol-  
lowing a written request for mediation,

a mediator, who is a neutral third  
party, will work with the farmer  
and NRCS to improve communi-  
cations, understand the relevant  
issues, develop alternatives, and  
reach a mutually satisfactory  
resolution. In general, media-  
tion is usually more helpful in  
disagreements with program  
decisions rather than techni-  
cal determinations. However,  
the nice thing is that media-  
tion tolls (suspends) the 30-  
day deadline to appeal. So, in addition  
to perhaps narrowing or clarifying the  
issues, a mediation request can give  
the farmer additional time to get their  
ducks in a row for an appeal.

The starting appeal option is an  
appeal to the FSA County Committee  
(COC). The COC is an elected board  
of, most times, three farmers from  
the county that the farmer lives in or  
is based out of. I've always liked the  
concept of the COC because, as farm-  
ers, it is tough for us to get a "jury of  
our peers" at the courthouse or other  
tribunals. But with the COC, you will  
have three farmers determining your  
matter. The downside is that farm com-  
munities are small, and people don't  
always get along. If you find yourself  
going in front of a COC where there  
is a member that has an axe to grind  
against you, this should be brought  
to the attention of the FSA and either  
the COC member recuses and/or an  
alternate is utilized. The COC will con-  
duct a hearing where the farmer can  
identify the reason for the appeal. If  
they determine the appeal has merit,  
FSA will request a field and technical  
review from the NRCS state conserva-  
tionist and will issue the results to you  
following the review.

If the farmer receives an adverse  
ruling from the state conservationist,  
the farmer can appeal the decision to  
the National Appeals Division (NAD).  
NAD is an organization within USDA  
that is formally independent from all  
other agencies and offices of the de-  
partment, including USDA officials at  
the state and local level. However, NAD  
remains subject to the general super-  
vision of and policy direction by the  
secretary and deputy secretary of agri-  
culture. The NAD director is appointed  
by and reports directly to the secretary  
of agriculture, whose authority over  
NAD may not be delegated to any other  
USDA officer or employee.

If a farmer chooses to appeal to  
NAD, there will be a hearing in front  
of an administrative law judge (a/k/a  
a hearing office). This gives the farmer  
the opportunity to present testimony  
and/or documentary evidence which  
demonstrates the determination was  
in error. NRCS will share data from

(Ag Law continued on page 16B)

## MIDWEST LANDOWNERS AND FAMILY FARM OWNERS

- Lunch
- Informative Program
- Fellowship
- Reservations Required

**THURSDAY,  
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11:30 AM to 2:30 PM

at the beautiful  
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19501 Vintage Trace Cir,  
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- 11:30 Registration
- 11:45 Introductions and  
Meet Fellow Land-  
owners
- 12:15 Luncheon (RSVP)
- 1:00 Program
- 2:30 Questions, then  
Social Hour

**Reservations Required!**  
To RSVP by Friday, February 13<sup>th</sup>  
or Questions Please Call Toll Free!

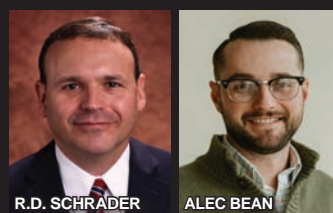
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### ASHLAND COUNTY 70-ACRE FARM & CHICKEN BARN ABSOLUTE AUCTION

**Tillable Land – Move-In Ready Home –  
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**Tuesday, February 17<sup>th</sup> @ 5:30 PM**

**Location:** The property is located at 1778  
County Road 175, Jeromesville, OH. From US Rt  
30, take County Road 175 north just over a mile  
to the property. Watch for RES signs.

**The auction will be held at the RES  
headquarters at 375 Fry Road, Wooster, OH.**

**Open House:** The home will be open for  
inspection **Tuesday, February 3<sup>rd</sup> 4-5:30PM.**

**The poultry barns will be available to view by  
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# Indiana couple turns farm into agritourism destination

By Stan Maddux  
Indiana Correspondent

MARTINSVILLE, Ind. – A different kind of farming that attracts up to 100,000 visitors a year occurs where an Indiana soybean field once existed.

Hunter's Honey Farm also specializes in raising Christmas trees, maple syrup production and other things like having fun with and educating their guests mostly from schools, churches and other organizations like 4-H.

The farm in Martinsville is a labor of love for owners, Tracy and Christina Hunter, who are both retired schoolteachers.

Tracy, a third-generation beekeeper, said he's had hives ever since he was 14 when his grandfather helped get him started.

After he and his wife were engaged, Hunter relocated his hives a short distance from Mooresville where he grew up to the soybean field he purchased in 1990 and later transformed into an agritourism destination.

They have about 1,000 hives, including one where visitors, wearing beekeepers' suits, can look into and watch the bees making honey.

"Sometimes, we let them feed the bees right out of their hands," he said.

Bees eat a mixture of honey, pollen and saliva after it has fermented inside the hive. The material is removed and given to visitors as feed for the bees.

Guided educational tours of the honey-making operation are offered along with hayrides. Also available are tours of the 100-acre forest on the property where about 300 maple trees are tapped to collect sap later boiled down into syrup at the farm.



Above: Tracy Hunter makes honey and raises Christmas trees at his agritourism farm in Indiana.

The tours include an explanation on how syrup and honey are made.

"I like to educate them on honeybees and what it takes to go from the bee to the bottle," he said.

In addition, there's a gift shop with products from local artisans and other things like beeswax candles made on site from materials captured from inside the hives.

Visitors can also sit at a sampling table inside the gift shop and taste up to 50 different types of honey made on the property. The varieties include raw honey, coffee-infused honey, honey lemonade and pumpkin-infused honey.

Bee venom sold for medicinal use is



Above: About 100,000 people visited Hunter's Honey Farm where guided tours and hayrides are among the offerings.

among the other products extracted from the hives belonging to the couple.

Hunter said another major part of the operation is using his bees to pollinate the melons, apples, cucumbers and pumpkins of his customers within the region.

The farm has 4,000 Christmas trees at the farm. The first ones were planted in 2000 to provide an extra source of income.

The farm is open year-round from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. every Monday through Saturday except Thanksgiving.

For now, Hunter said he has no plans to retire from what's become a

full-time job despite years of enduring the occasional honeybee sting through his beekeeper's suit.

Hunter said it's been years since a bee sting has caused him any swelling, but he's not become immune to the pain. Nevertheless, Hunter said the pain doesn't outweigh the love he has for handling his bees and making honey.

"My wife and I, we wake up in the morning talking about honeybees and we go to bed at night talking about honeybees. Just like any farming, this is our way of life. I enjoy it thoroughly," he said.

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Thurs., February 12, 2026

2026

February

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12

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Tillable Acreage • Development Potential

Contact: Jason Johnloz: 260.273.9177 or Rick Johnloz: 260.827.8181

ALLEN CO, IN: JANUARY 28 (ONLINE) 293+/- Acres • 11 Tracts

Tillable • Potential Building Sites • Recreation • Hunting

Contact: Jon Rosen: 260.740.1846, Rick Johnloz: 260.827.8181 or Jason Johnloz: 260.273.9177

MORROW CO, OH: FEBRUARY 3 (ONLINE) 159.06+/- Acres

Recreation • Hunting • Woods

Contact: Brett Salyers: 419.806.5643 or Emily Wildermuth: 937.631.5047

CLINTON CO, IN: FEBRUARY 9 (ONLINE) 165.48+/- Acres • 3 Tracts

Prime Tillable Farmland • Potential Building Site • Creek

Contact: Sam Clark: 317.442.0251 or Jim Clark: 317.627.6928

MARSHALL CO, IN: FEBRUARY 10 (ONLINE) 172+/- Acres

4 Tracts • Tillable • Potential Building Sites • Woods

Contact: AJ Jordan: 317.697.3086, Jon Rosen: 260.740.1846 or Larry Jordan: 765.473.5849

NEW! LAPORTE CO, IN: FEBRUARY 17 (ONLINE) 81.78+/- Acres

High Quality Tillable Farmland & Soils

Contact: Nolan Sampson: 219.575.1486 or Larry Smith: 219.716.4041

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Rural Indiana winery and acreage brought over \$1.3 million at auction

**Illinois**

Buncombe, IL - On Dec. 23, Joe Ollis Auction Service reaucted two previously offered tracts. Tract 1, which failed to close, contained approximately 40 open acres suitable for livestock or recreation, with a 45-by-72-foot pole barn, a 40-by-50-foot traditional barn, fencing, and two ponds. Tract 2, which didn't meet its earlier reserve, totaled approximately 9.118 acres of open and wooded land suitable for hobby farming, horses, or hunting. It featured a 1,629-square-foot, 3-bedroom/1-bath circa-1880 farmhouse. Tract 1 sold for \$200,250, and Tract 2 for \$86,000.

Tazewell County - Murray Wise Associates conducted an online auction on Dec. 10 for 141 +/- acres of prime farmland with five outbuildings. The parcel included 122.95 FSA DCP cropland acres. DCP crop data showed 83.30 base acres for corn 83.30 and 35.30 for soybeans. Soils were primarily Ipava silt loam, Sable silty clay loam, and Saybrook silt loam, with a Productivity Index of 139.5. The sale included all mineral rights and an open 2025 lease, with the buyer receiving all 2025 income and responsible for all 2025 farm expenses. The property sold for \$2,166,318 (\$15,400/acre).

**Indiana**

Greene County - On Dec. 16, Schradler Real Estate and Auction Co. offered in one tract, 80 +/- acres with a one-story house. It contained approximately 77 tillable acres, with extensive drainage tiling, and predominantly Henshaw, Montgomery and Rensselaer soils. It held a 1,136-square-foot 2-bedroom/1-bath

single-story frame home, with a full basement, wrap-around porch, oil furnace, and central air. Possession was for the 2026 crop year. The tract sold for \$660,000.

Seymour - Don Smock Auction Co. conducted a live/simulcast auction on Dec. 17 of 97 +/- acres with a winery and all improvements, offered in three tracts. Known as Chateau De Pique, Tract 1 comprised 11.82 +/- acres zoned R1, including 0.67 +/- acres of grapes, 2.93 +/- acres of farmland, and the balance for buildings and grounds. Improvements included a two-story 7,500-square-foot wine tasting and event center with food service equipment, furnishings, and personal property included; a 4,300-square-foot winery production facility with all equipment; a 1,100-square-foot shop/storage building; a 1,300-square-foot restroom and tent event center with cold storage; and a 640-square-foot storage shed. It also included all intellectual property, branding and the liquor license. Tract 2 consisted of 66.48 +/- acres zoned R1, with 2.02 +/- acres of grapes and 43.07 +/- acres of farmland, and included a 300-seat amphitheater with an 800-square-foot covered outdoor stage. Tract 3 was 18.9 +/- wooded acres zoned R1 with 641 feet of I-65 frontage. Tracts 1 and 2 sold together for \$1,275,000, and Tract 3 sold for \$57,500 (\$3,042/acre).

**Kentucky**

Gilbertsville - On Dec. 18, Harris Real Estate & Auction conducted an absolute auction of 185.72 +/- gently rolling acres of farmland and woodlands, currently a cow/calf operation, offered in four tracts. Suitable for continued cattle

raising, row crop farming or recreation, Tract 1 contained 36.34 acres, Tract 2, 26.21 acres, Tract 3, 86.37 acres, and Tract 4, 36.80 acres. The parcels sold together for \$375,000 (\$2,019/acre).

Reed - Herron Auction & Realty conducted a live/webcast auction on Dec. 19 of a 200.58 +/- acre farm with Ohio River bottomland. Per USDA, the property included approximately 183 acres of mostly flat cropland, mainly in Sciotoville, Ashton and Newark silt loams. The remainder was woods along the front and edges, with good frontage on Ohio River Road #2. Mineral rights conveyed, and farming rights transferred at closing. It sold for \$1,564,524 (\$7,800/acre).

**Michigan**

Hillsdale County - On Dec. 15, Schradler Real Estate and Auction Co. presented 122 +/- acres in seven tracts. The mostly tillable, gently rolling land featured Williamstown Conover, Wawasee Loam, and Wolcott Silt Loam soils, with frontage on M-99 (Pioneer Road), Tamarack Road and Lake Pleasant Road. Tract 1 included 18 +/- acres with a small wooded area in the NW corner and M-99 frontage, suitable for a homesite or recreation. Tract 2 was an 18 +/- acre mostly tillable "swing" requiring combining with an adjoining tract. Tract 3 held 20 +/- acres with frontage on M-99 and Tamarack Road; Tract 4, 20 +/- acres on Tamarack Road; Tract 5, 14 +/- acres on Tamarack Road; Tract 6, 16 +/- acres at Tamarack and Lake Pleasant roads; and Tract 7, 16 +/- acres on Lake Pleasant Road adjacent to woods. Tracts 1-4 sold for \$592,912 (\$7,801/acre), and Tracts 5-7 brought \$334,088 (\$7,263/acre).

Kinde - On Dec. 17, Albrecht Auction held an online auction of 121 +/- acres of farmland with a home and outbuildings, offered in three tracts. Tract 1

contained 77.7 +/- acres (approximately 74.38 tillable), retiled in 2012, with Bird Creek running along the north-south boundary, with a culvert for access. Soils were mainly Kilmanagh cobbly loam, Shebeon cobbly loam and Kilmanagh loam. Tract 1 could be combined with Tract 2, consisting of 3.3 +/- acres with a 1,630-square-foot, 5-bedroom/1-bath farmhouse, detached 1-car garage, 48-by-104-foot equipment shed with workshop and 12-foot ceilings, and a 30-by-60-foot hip-roof storage barn. Tract 3, located one mile south of Tract 1, contained 40 +/- acres (37 tillable) with Corunna sandy loam, Avoca loamy sand and Shebeon cobbly loam soils. Tracts 1 and 2 sold together for \$947,000; Tract 3 sold for \$394,500 (\$9,850/acre).

**Ohio**

Brown County - On Dec. 11, Wilson National auctioned 20 acres of farm/recreational land with a barn. The parcel offered 16.76 tillable acres, 3.5 acres of woods in the rear for hunting, 350 feet of road frontage, and a simple barn. The property sold for \$184,000 (\$9,200/acre).

North Bloomfield - On Dec. 22, Kaufman Realty & Auction conducted a live/onsite auction with no buyer's premium for a 48.6-acre farm offered in five tracts. Tract 1 included 5.2 acres, open in front and wooded in back, with a 1,568-square-foot older home and horse barn. Tract 2 contained 12.68 open and wooded acres with a potential building site. Tracts 3 and 4 each had 10.24 open and wooded acres with building site potential. Tract 5 also included 10.24 open and wooded acres bordering the Western Reserve Greenway Trail with a potential building site. The parcels sold together for \$525,000.

LAND AUCTION

SATURDAY  
January 31<sup>ST</sup> 2026 @ 10:00 AM

Premier Graves County Land Opportunity!

292<sup>±</sup> ACRES

IN 6 TRACTS & COMBINATIONS

Buyer will receive 2026 crop rights upon the removal of current wheat crop.

APPROXIMATELY  
270<sup>±</sup> ACRES ARE TILLABLE!

FARM LOCATION: 2323 Cardinal Road, Mayfield, KY 42066

Located along Cardinal Road in Mayfield, Kentucky, this 292± acre property offers an outstanding blend of highly productive cropland and sought-after rural building sites. With approximately 270± acres tillable, this farm delivers excellent agricultural income potential and long-term investment value. Multiple tracts feature Cardinal Road frontage, providing convenient access and attractive settings ideal for future homesites. An exceptional opportunity for farmers, investors, and buyers seeking quality Graves County land.

REAL ESTATE TRACTS

Tract 1	22± Acres
Tract 2	20± Acres
Tract 3	21± Acres
Tract 4	45± Acres
Tract 5	100± Acres
Tract 6	84± Acres

AUCTION HELD AT:  
Harris Auction Facility  
3855 St. Rt. 45 N.  
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REAL ESTATE TERMS: The property will be offered in 6 individual tracts, any combination of tracts, or as a whole property. The property will be sold in the manner resulting in the highest total sale price. A 10% Buyer's Premium will be added to the final bid and included in the deed transaction sale price. 15% as down payment on the day of the auction with balance in cash at closing on or before 30 days. The down payment may be in the form of cashier's check, personal check, or corporate check. **SURVEY:** Real estate sells by existing deed description. If sold in individual tracts, a new survey will be completed, and the buyer shall be responsible for fifty percent (50%) of the survey cost. **CROP RIGHTS:** Buyer will receive 2026 crop rights upon removal of current wheat crop. **YOUR BIDDING IS NOT CONDITIONAL UPON FINANCING.** SO BE SURE YOU HAVE ARRANGED FINANCING, IF NEEDED, AND ARE CAPABLE OF PAYING CASH AT CLOSING. Closing shall take place on or before 30 days from auction date. All 2025 ad valorem taxes will be prorated at closing.

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# Winter is the best time to improve your beef business

January can be a great time to reflect on the previous year and look ahead to improve in the new year. No calves hitting the ground. No processing days. No dust, flies or heat stress. January is a time you can fix problems before they cost you real money.

By the time calving starts, you are in “work mode” vs. “planning mode.”

**Herd health happens in advance**

Most health problems you deal with in spring weren't caused in spring.

- Weak calves? Often, a late-gestation nutrition issue
- Calves with scours last year? Usually, environment + colostrum + density factors involved
- Less than a 95 percent pregnancy rate in a 65-day breeding season?

## BEEF HERD HEALTH

BY W. MARK HILTON, DVM

Look back at cow body condition score (BCS), bull power, or skipping a bull breeding soundness exam (BBSE)

January is when you still have time to change outcomes instead of reacting and treating symptoms.

**A simple January herd health review**

Every herd – large or small – should answer a few questions right now, while memories are still fresh. I hope you grab a pen and paper and write down your thoughts.

1. What went wrong last year? Not only what you treated, but what actually cost you money.
  - How many calves got sick?
  - How many calves were lost?
  - How many cows were open or late calvers?

- Did calves meet weight and quality expectations at weaning?

If you have 50 cows and lose four calves versus two, those two calves likely would have been worth \$2,000 the day of weaning. How would an extra \$4,000 impact your beef business?

2. When did the problem actually start?

This is where most conversations get uncomfortable, but productive.

I worked with a Midwest producer last year who blamed scours on “a bad bug.”

The real issue? A combination of thin cows at calving, feeding poor-quality hay, and the most important factor of too many cows calving in one area. We made a plan to get hay cut earlier, test hay, balance a winter ration and try the Sandhill's Calving System (SCC - please look it up). I have implemented the SCC in many other herds, and scours rates frequently go to zero.

3. What did you assume was “good enough”?

January is a good time to challenge assumptions.

- “The hay looks fine”
- “We've always fed this way”
- “We vaccinate, so we're covered”
- “Our mineral program hasn't changed in years”

Those statements don't mean they're wrong, but they're worth revisiting.

er assisted births and improved re-breeding.

**Bulls matter more than we might think**

January is also bull season – whether we think about it or not.

Frozen ground and cold weather are when foot and leg problems show up, body condition either recovers, or doesn't, and old injuries become obvious.

If a bull can't move comfortably in January, he won't perform in May. Don't wait until turnout to find problems that may be festering now.

Pick one thing to fix, not 10

The biggest mistake we make in January is trying to overhaul everything. Don't.

Pick one herd health change for 2026:

- Test hay and adjust late-gestation supplementation
- Reduce calving density – learn about the Sandhills Calving System
- Separate heifers from cows pre-calving
- Have a consult with your herd health veterinarian about updating your herd health plan

One good change, done well, beats five changes done halfway.

**Looking ahead: a year of practical herd health**

This January column kicks off a 2026 series focused on practical, day-to-day herd health and economic decisions – not theory, not perfection, and not things that only work on paper.

Over the coming months, we'll tackle:

- Nutrition-driven health problems
- Scours prevention that works
- Bull management beyond breeding soundness exams
- Biosecurity mistakes that cost producers money
- Small management changes with big financial returns

Herd health isn't something you do during emergencies. It's something you build intentionally, and often in months like January.

Look at the ideas above and ask yourself, “Who is the expert in this area?” For health issues, contact your herd health veterinarian. For nutrition-related issues, your nutritionist can be a valuable asset. When I do herd consults, I find that many beef producers think they are too small to have a nutritionist. I disagree. Nearly every feed company has a nutritionist on staff. They are there to help you, and they want to help you.

Another idea is to contact the most successful beef producer in your area and ask them for one suggestion to help you reach your goal to be a top-tier beef producer (or maybe you are that person).

While not a “health” issue directly, having a grazing plan for the year is very important. On our farm when I was a boy, having our county extension educator help us to improve our pastures was hugely important to the success of our beef business. The improvements allowed us to increase cow numbers on the same acres of land while improving our soil, and feeding hay for a shorter time because we grazed longer. These changes greatly improved our bottom line. The biggest impact was when we learned how to frost seed red clover onto our grass pastures in late January-early February. Call your extension office to learn how to improve your pastures.

If you use winter to plan for 2026, spring gets a whole lot easier.

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Farm Location: 2691 N. Bollinger Rd. Casstown, OH

Auction Location: Champaign County Fairgrounds, Urbana, OH

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# USDA raises 2026 milk production; 2025 production estimate unchanged

USDA left its 2025 milk production estimate unchanged in this week's World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimate report, but raised the 2026 estimate based on an expected higher output per cow.

2026 production and marketings were projected at 234.3 and 233.3 billion pounds, up 200 million pounds on production, and up 100 million on marketings from a month ago. If realized, production would be up 3.2 billion pounds or 1.4 percent from 2025.

The 2026 fat basis import estimate was raised on higher shipments of butterfat products and cheese. Imports were lowered on a skim solids basis. Fat basis 2025 exports were raised on strong shipments of butter and cheese. Butter and cheese are expected to remain competitive on the international market, says USDA, and 2026 fat basis exports were raised as well. Skim-solids exports in 2025 were reduced, primarily on lower whey products, with the reductions carried over into 2026.

Butter and cheese prices for 2026 were reduced on recent price weakness, but nonfat dry milk (NDM) and whey were raised on robust demand for protein.

Class III milk prices were lowered, with lower cheese prices more than offsetting higher whey. The 2025 average was \$18.01 per hundredweight (cwt.), down from \$18.89 in 2024, and compares to \$17.02 in 2023. The 2026 average was projected at \$16.35, down 70 cents from what was estimated a month ago.

The Class IV was raised on stronger NDM prices more than offsetting lower butter. The 2025 average was \$17.38, down from \$20.75 in 2024 and \$19.12 in 2023. The 2026 average was estimated at \$14.45, up a nickel from last month.

This month's corn outlook is for larger production, higher feed and residual use, reduced food, seed and industrial use, and greater ending stocks. Corn production was estimated at 17.0 billion bushels, up 269 million or 14 percent from 2024. Average yield was estimated at a whopping 186.5 bushels per acre and a 1.3-million acre rise in harvested area, now estimated at 91.3 million, up 10 percent from 2024. The harvested area has surged 4.5 million acres since July 2025, according to the USDA, and the record crop in 2025 exceeded the prior high set in 2023 by 1.7 billion bushels or over 40 million tons.

Total corn use was raised 90 million bushels to 16.4 billion. Feed and residual use was up 100 million bushels to 6.2 billion. Corn stocks were boosted 198 million bushels to 2.2 billion. The season-average corn price was raised 10 cents to \$4.10 per bushel.

Soybean production was estimated at 4.26 billion bushels, down 3 percent from 2024. Harvested area was estimated at 80.4 million acres, down 7 percent. Yield was estimated at a record 53.0 bushels per acre, up 2.3 bushels from 2024. The soybean supply for 2025/26 was raised 17 million bushels on higher beginning stocks and production. Soybean crush was raised 15 million bushels to 2.57 billion bushels.

Soybean exports were revised 60 million bushels lower to 1.575 billion on higher production and exports for Brazil. Ending stocks were projected at 350 million bushels, up 60 million. The season-average soybean price was projected at \$10.20 per bushel, down 30 cents. Soybean meal was forecast at \$295 per short ton, down \$5.

The USDA issued the September and October Dairy Supply and Utilization reports this week. Cheese

utilization totaled 1.284 million pounds in October, up just 0.7 percent from October 2024, with domestic use down 1.9 percent. Exports amounted to 121.4 million, up 35.8 percent. September usage was up 2.8 percent, with domestic use up 0.3 percent, and exports up 34.5 percent. Year-to-date cheese usage was down 1.7 percent domestically and up 19.4 percent on exports.

October butter usage totaled 215.7 million pounds, down 7.9 percent from a year ago. Domestic use was down 12.7 percent, exports were up 171.7 percent, and YTD utilization was up 141 percent from a year ago. September usage was up 8.8 percent from September 2024.

Nonfat/skim milk powder utilization came in at 172.5 million pounds in October, off 0.3 percent from a year ago. Domestic usage was down 2.6 percent while exports were up 0.3 percent. YTD powder usage was down 12.1 percent.

October dry whey usage fell to 67.5 million pounds, down 6.1 percent, with domestic use down 27.3 percent, while exports were up 19.8 percent and YTD up 6.9 percent.

Meanwhile, fluid milk sales disappointed again. The USDA's latest data showed November packaged sales at 3.585 billion pounds, down 1.8 percent from November 2024, and follows a 0.1 percent slippage in October.

Conventional product sales totaled 3.4 billion pounds, down 1.5 percent from a year ago. Organic sales, at 234 million, were down 1.8 percent from a year ago, and represented a typical 6.5 percent of total milk sales in the month.

Whole milk sales totaled 1.3 billion pounds, up 1.3 percent from a year ago, and up 0.5 percent year to date. Whole milk represented 36.4 percent of total sales for the month, up from 35.1 percent in October.

Skim milk sales, at 141 million pounds, were down 6.0 percent from a year ago, but up 2.2 percent YTD.

Packaged fluid sales in the 11-month period totaled 38.9 billion pounds, down 1.1 percent from

2024. Conventional product sales totaled 36.1 billion, down 1.0 percent from a year ago. Organic products, at 2.7 billion pounds, were down 1.8 percent, and represented 7.0 percent of total milk sales in the 11 months. The figures represent consumption in Federal market orders which account for about 92 percent of total fluid sales in the U.S. About 7.5 percent of U.S. fluid sales are consumed in schools.

Speaking of milk in schools, President Donald Trump recently signed the Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act of 2025 into law, clearing the way for whole and 2 percent milk to return to school cafeterias for the first time in more than a decade. The bill allows schools to provide students with a variety of fluid milk options, which can include flavored and unflavored organic or conventional whole, 2 percent, 1 percent, skim, and lactose-free milk.

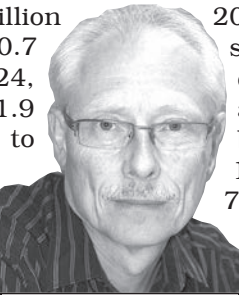
The signing was praised by the National Milk Producers Federation and Michael Dykes, president and CEO of the International Dairy Foods Asso-

ciation, called the law "a win for our children, parents, and school nutrition leaders, giving schools the flexibility to offer the flavored and unflavored milk options, across all healthy fat levels that meet students' needs and preferences."

Cash cheese was bleeding this week. Block Cheddar fell to \$1.2825 per pound Monday, lowest CME price since May 5, 2020, when it was \$1.2575.

HighGround Dairy's Commodity Price Forecast says the cheese market is "a supply-side game presently as cheese production gains overwhelm a tepid consumer marketplace. Greater exports helped soak up some of this excess cheese, but inventories keep rising and there does not appear to be any significant change in sight."

StoneX broker Dave Kurzawski says dairy is starting 2026 in a "recession," and he does not know if cheese has hit bottom. He said the International Dairy Foods Association's annual Dairy Forum Jan. 25-28 in Palm Desert, Calif., will provide a lot of insight on how the shakers and movers view what's ahead.



MIELKE MARKET WEEKLY  
By Lee Mielke

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**27 75.1± ACRES IN 4 TRACTS.** Kosciusko County, IN. Beautiful Rolling Property Close to Warsaw • Potential Residential Development Opportunity • Great Country Estate & Mini Farm Building Sites • Productive Tillable Farmland with 74.7 FSA Cropland Acres • Tracts Ranging in Size from 13-21± Acres. Contact Joe Kessie 260-609-4640 or Drew Lamle 260-609-4926.

**28 90± ACRES IN 4 TRACTS.** Whitley County, IN. Tillable Farmland • Hunting & Recreational Land • Country Homestead. Contact Arden Schrader 260-229-2442.

### FEBRUARY

**10 176.8± ACRES IN 3 TRACTS.** Pike County, IN. Joining Patoka River National Wildlife Refuge • Excellent Hunting Area • Over ½ Mile of Patoka River Frontage. Contact Brad Horrall 812-890-8255.

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**25 114± ACRES IN 6 TRACTS.** Adams County, IN. Mostly Tillable • 4± Wooded Acres • 7± Miles Northeast of Berne • 10± Miles Southeast of Decatur • Approximately 1 Mile from the Indiana/Ohio Border. Contact Al Pfister 260-760-8922.

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### JANUARY

**25 PERSONAL PROPERTY - TIMED ONLINE ONLY.** Allen County, IN. Contact Jared Sipe 260-750-1553.

**26 PERSONAL PROPERTY - TIMED ONLINE ONLY.** Allen County, IN. Contact Mike Roy 260-437-5428.

### FEBRUARY

**1 PERSONAL PROPERTY - TIMED ONLINE ONLY.** Allen County, IN. Contact Stephanie Swinehart 260-433-8117.

**5 FARM EQUIPMENT CONSIGNMENT - VIRTUAL AND TIMED ONLINE.** Various Locations. Contact Eric Ott 260-413-0787 or Robert Mishler 260-336-9750 or Mark Schroeder 260-564-0570.

**5 PERSONAL PROPERTY - TIMED ONLINE ONLY.** Whitley County, IN. Contact Phil Wolfe 260-248-1191.

**9 FARM EQUIPMENT.** Kalamazoo County, IN. Contact Ed Boyer 574-215-7653 or Ted Boyer 574-215-8100.

**21 FARM EQUIPMENT.** Whitley County, IN. Contact Ritter Cox 260-609-3306.

### Featured Farms

**CASS CO., IN - 228± ACRES.** • Prime Investment Quality Farmland • Excellent Location • Excellent Soils • Excellent Yields • 10± miles SE of Logansport, IN • 20± miles NW of Kokomo, IN. Call Jim Hayworth 765-427-1913 or Todd Freeman 765-414-1863. (JH/TF01C)

**HANCOCK CO., IN - 86± ACRES.** In 3 tracts all southeast of Greenfield, Indiana. All cropland with good frontage in excellent location. 2026 crop rights available. Offered separately or in combination. Agents Steve Slonaker, 765-969-1697 or Andy Walther, 765-969-0401.

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# Collecting barbed wire is a history lesson of ranching in America

I'm a barb-arian, one of about ten thousand people who collect barbed wire. I've been collecting barbed wire for over 40 years and have nearly 500 different pieces in my collection, but I'm an amateur compared to some barb-arians.

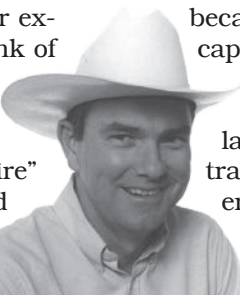
I traveled all over the country in my job and was always looking for wire I didn't have. I wrote a story about one man in Texas whose entire ranch was wrapped in a very rare wire that was his retirement and IRA. Naturally, I coveted a piece of his wire and came away with an 18 inch piece of the rarest wire I have in my collection. Then after a column I wrote years ago about my barbed wire collection my friend Dan from Gettysburg, South Dakota, sent me his entire collection!

I have lots of wire that wasn't intended for use with cattle. The earliest piece of wire in my collection dates back to the 1850s and the smooth wire was used for horses. Such wire was

called "obvious wire" and another example in my collection has a chunk of wood everywhere a barb should be. This was not nearly as cruel as the "vicious wire" that came later. I really like my "planter's wire" which has knots or balls spaced evenly. You took the wire off your fence, laid it in your garden and planted a seed at every ball or knot. When you were done planting your garden you put the wire back on your fence.

People might think barbed wire is cruel to animals but we've always reserved the most barbaric wire for humans. I have a piece of World War I German barbed wire that has a three-quarter inch sharp barbs every inch and a piece of Vietnam wire that has metal spears at the tip of razor wire.

One of my favorites is not that rare and is called Brinkerhoff Ribbon. I like it because of its history. When Texas



It's THE PITTS  
By Lee Pitts

became a state they wanted a capital building but they were short of money but what they did have was lots of land. So they promised to trade three million acres covering land in ten counties in the Texas Panhandle to a mostly British syndicate if they'd build them a capital building. One version says that the Texas Capital had to be taller than the one in Washington DC. The syndicate enclosed the entire three million acres with the Brinkerhoff wire which consisted of a flat ribbon of wire 3/8 of an inch wide with flat lance-like barbs every four and a half inches.

In the 1870s barbed wire made cattle drives nearly impossible, closed off water holes and free grass and many ranchers thought it was the ruination of the country so they formed fence cutting groups like the Rolling Fence Cutters, Hatchet Company and Knights of the Nippers.

I think my collection will pay off better than Bitcoin because ten years from now ranchers won't put up barbed wire fences but instead will

rely on virtual fences, where cattle will wear shock collars and receive shocks from a transmitter tower if they leave the reservation. It's simply a matter of economics. I read of one rancher whose fences all burned down in a fire and he got a quote of nearly 10 million dollars to re-fence his ranch! And have you priced railroad ties these days?

Those peddling virtual fences could take a lesson from John "Bet A Million" Gates who owned a half interest in an Illinois hardware store. To sell more barbed wire he put up an enclosure in a San Antonio, Texas, plaza and enclosed it in barbed wire. Then he bet onlookers that he could run in a bunch of "wild" Longhorns and the wire would hold them. He even had a cowboy on horseback enter the pen with two flaming torches to frighten the cattle. But the fence held and the universal use of barbed wire took hold. In 1874 ten thousand pounds of barbed wire sold; six years later ranchers bought over 80 million pounds!

Just like the penny, someday barbed wire will become obsolete and I'm hoping my rusty barbed wire collection will be worth more than the cattle it held captive.

## Spaulding

FROM PAGE 12B

gar typically live in bigger rivers.

Gar are ambush predators, lying still near the water's surface to feed on small fish as they swim past. Gar are difficult to catch using basic hook and line techniques because of their hard, bony mouths. Many methods have been developed to catch gar, including using a snare with bait in the middle which tightens around the gar's mouth.

Phil Kacmar, who is the big rivers fisheries biologist for the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR), says anglers who use live bait to catch gar should let gar bite and run with the bait to give them time work the fish down in their mouth to have better success of hooking and landing it.

### Terre Haute Man Injured In ORV Accident

Indiana Conservation Officers are investigating an off-road vehicle (ORV) accident occurring the afternoon of January 8 in Terre Haute. About 1:50 p.m., officers responded to the

area near the 10200 block of South Hutchinson Street in response to an accident involving an ORV.

Upon arrival, officers learned Mark Priehs, 19, of Terre Haute, was operating the ORV on the roadway when he drove into a ditch, causing the ORV to roll on top of him. A nearby Good Samaritan immediately helped remove the machine from Priehs.

Priehs was flown to IU Health Methodist Hospital in Indianapolis in stable condition with a back injury. Priehs was wearing a helmet at the time of the accident.

For information on ORV laws and safe operating procedures, please visit: [offroad-ed.com/IN/handbook/](http://offroad-ed.com/IN/handbook/) and [on.IN.gov/offroading](http://on.IN.gov/offroading).

'till next time,  
Jack

Readers can contact the author by writing to this publication or e-mail Jack at [jackspaulding1971@outlook.com](mailto:jackspaulding1971@outlook.com)

Spaulding's books, "The Best Of Spaulding Outdoors" and "The Coon Hunter And The Kid" are available from Amazon.com as a paperback or Kindle download.



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# Congratulations 2025 Yield Contest Winners

## Seed Genetics Direct 2025 Corn Yield Contest Winners

### FIRST--James Jacobs--Bloomingsburg, Ohio

AGI-C-4111PWE    323.36 BU/ AC.    NCGA NO-TILL 3rd OHIO  
AGI-C-6112PWE    304.07 BU/AC.    NCGA NO-TILL 5th OHIO

### SECOND--Don Jackson--Camden, Ohio

AGI-C-6112PWE    297.06 BU/AC.    NCGA STRIP-TILL, MIN. TILL 8th OHIO

### THIRD--Hartsock Farms/Tim & Tom--Circleville, Ohio

AGI-C-3114PWE    257.79 BU/AC.    NCGA STRIP-TILL, MIN. TILL. IRRIGATED 5th OHIO

## Seed Genetics Direct 2025 Soybean Yield Contest Winners

### FIRST--Wenning Farms Inc.--Greensburg, Indiana

ET-4738E3            102.54 BU/AC.            1st

### SECOND--Kannon Jones--Greensfork, Indiana

ET-4736E3            99.66 BU/AC            2nd

### THIRD--Bruce Stephens/85:10 Farms--Columbus Grove, Ohio

ET-3731E3            90.89 BU/AC.            3rd



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