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McPherson County youth earns national sheep honor

By **Beth Gaines-Riffel,**
Editor

It started out innocently enough. In fact, in the very beginning, Nichole Ely's sheep enterprise started out as a thoughtful Christmas present from her parents. They believed that the pair of bred Dorset ewes would give their daughter a foundation from which a business could be built, yet fit within a budget and the space requirements of their small Central Kansas farm. Yet, little did they know in the intervening years, Nichole would increase her flock, make difficult decisions, learn leadership and develop an solid work ethic and in the end earn national recognition for her flock of sheep.

That is exactly what happened this past fall during the National FFA convention. During the national awards presentations Ely heard her name called and was presented with a plaque and a \$1,000 check for earning the National Sheep Proficiency award.

Nichole, who is now attending Kansas State University majoring in agricultural communications and animal science and industry, is the daughter of Lowell and Paula Ely of rural Inman. In addition to being "Dad" Lowell has the additional distinction of being

the vocational agriculture instructor and FFA advisor at Inman High school — so his interest in seeing his student succeed was doubly vested.

The bright-eyed blonde is passionate about her sheep flock and has learned lessons about developing a business plan and good animal husbandry through the intervening years when she was first presented those two bred ewes.

"After those first two ewes I was given, I purchased 10 head of ewes," she explained noting that these ewes would be the foundation of her flock as she kept replacement ewes and additional females grow her operation.

Looking from a bottom-line perspective, Ely realized how her budget was a bit of a limiting factor. "I knew that I could make improvement by purchasing good sires," she explained. "It was not a fast process."

As her flock evolved, she focused on rams that would allow her to raise lambs that could be competitive in the show ring. To that end, the Dorsets were phased out and black-faced genetics, including Hampshire were introduced.

The show ring was a natural venue for Ely to showcase her skills in animal



Nichole Ely, Inman High School graduate, was named National FFA Sheep Proficiency Award winner during the convention held in Indianapolis.

husbandry. It was to this end she learned how to feed and prepare sheep for the county fair, purchasing animals to use as projects initially. Toward the end of her eligibility in 4-H and FFA

shows, she transitioned from one who was buying lambs, to one who had projects for sale. Today she includes animals in a few small sales and offers show prospects for sale private treaty on the farm.

"I enjoy helping other kids learn, and offering them projects which can be affordable," she said.

One of the families that Nichole has established a good relationship with is the Meyer family in neighboring Marion County. "It has been fun to get Nick and Elizabeth started in sheep, just like I did when I was starting out," she explained. Her kind smile and easy going leadership style make the teaching easy.

One of her fondest memories is winning the McPherson County fair with a home-raised animal.

But with any livestock enterprise, there is a lot of hard work and daily care. She noted that her parents were sticklers making sure that the chores were done morning and night — which was not necessarily an easy task for a high school student with a busy schedule. Now that she's in college, her family cares for the flock on a day-to-day basis but she is expected to pitch in regularly on breaks and during busy times — such as lambing and weaning.

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Grazing management benefits resources and bottom-line

By **Mark Parker**

The same grazing management techniques that increase efficiency and enhance productivity can also have a positive impact on water and forage resources. That was the take-home message from a grazing workshop held recently in Emporia where Dale Kirkham of the Kansas Rural Center challenged producers to "create a positive impact every time you go to the pasture."

Kirkham, who is part of the Kansas Rural Center's Clean Water Farms Project team, suggested that better care and utilization of forage resources can be the reward of simple, everyday steps.

Spreading out hay, for instance, minimizes manure buildup which benefits grass, water quality and cattle herd health, he noted. Placement of salt, minerals or supplements in under-utilized portions of a pasture improves grazing distribution and not over-grazing pastures provides important shelter for newborn calves.

A rancher himself, Kirk-



Dale Kirkham explained to area ranchers the return for managing grazing resources effectively.

ham added that feeding at different times, and in different locations, can prevent the degradation of specific areas in the pasture.

He also emphasized that livestock producers have the opportunity to improve water quality while aiding both wildlife habitat and grazing distribution by protecting riparian areas with off-stream watering alternatives. A range of strategies, from stream crossings and solar pumps to buffer strips

and rotational grazing, can be beneficial to the sustainable production of livestock.

In the long-term, livestock producers have yet another incentive for optimizing forage management.

"If you look at the whole country, we're going to have to be more efficient in the way we graze livestock," Kirkham said. "We are rapidly losing our forage base and it's going to be increasingly important to have ani-

mals that are more efficient and for us to handle forages more efficiently."

Kansas State University Professor Emeritus Gary Kilgore offered producers suggestions toward achieving that goal. Kilgore advised that grazers have the tools to extend the grazing season and minimize reliance on harvested forages.

The key, he said, lies in understanding the nutritional requirements of cattle and matching those needs with the right forage at the right time. In general, Kilgore pointed out that cool season species, such as fescue and brome, are at their quality peak in March, April and May but drop in nutritional content in the summer months. Warm season forages like crabgrass, Bermudagrass and native species can do an excellent job of filling in the summer quality gap, he suggested.

Summer grazing and cattle performance can also be improved by inter-seeding legumes into fescue and brome pastures. Red clover, alsike and ladino clover are the best candidates, Kilgore said, adding that inter-seed-

ing legumes works best in cool season, rather than warm season, grass pastures.

A variety of summer annuals such as Sudan grass and hybrid pearl millet are other warm season alternatives.

Producers also have a wide range of forages that can extend the grazing season when temperatures begin to fall.

Turnips, for instance, provide excellent short-term fall grazing and give producers a six- to eight-week window in which to stockpile fescue for later utilization. Winter cereals like wheat, rye and triticale can also be utilized to stretch grazing days further into winter and early spring.

Kilgore cautioned that selecting adapted species is critical to grazing success. "There are a lot of exotics out there," he observed. "Please don't plant a forage you're not familiar with. A lot of forages are being brought in and promoted and you have to be very careful. It's not uncommon to plant one of these miracle forages and have it disap-

pear after the first hot, dry spell."

The K-State agronomist also had recommendations for getting forages started and keeping them viable. "Get a soil test," Kilgore emphasized. "That is absolutely critical, especially with the price of fertilizer

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Guest Editorial

What to Resolve This New Year's

By Alex Epstein

Given the devastated state of many Americans' finances, our New Year's resolutions will take on

greater significance this year. To "get out of debt" was often a casually stated goal to be set as midnight approached and forgotten

soon after; today it is rightly recognized as a fundamental necessity of life. Unfortunately, the New Year's commitment to self-

improvement is widely viewed with cynicism — in part because New Year's resolutions go so notoriously unmet. After years of watching others — or themselves — excitedly commit to a new goal, only to abandon the quest by March, many come to conclude that New Year's resolutions are an exercise in futility that should not be taken seriously. "The silly season is upon us," writes a columnist for the Washington Post, "when people feel compelled to remake themselves with New Year's resolutions."

But this attitude is false and self-destructive. Making New Year's resolutions does not have to be futile — and to make them is not silly. Done seriously, it is an act of profound moral significance that embodies the essence of a life well-lived.

Consider what a New Year's resolution consists of: we look at where we are in some area of life, think about where we want to be, and then set ourselves a goal to get there. We are tired of feeling chubby and lethargic, say, and want the improved appearance and greater energy level that comes with greater fitness. So we resolve to take up a fun athletic activity — like tennis or a martial art — and plan to do it three times a week. Is this a laughable act of self-delusion? Hardly. If it were, then how would anyone ever achieve anything in life? In fact, to make a New Year's resolution is to recognize the undeniable reality that successful goal-pursuit is possible — the reality that everyone at one time or another has set and achieved long-range goals, and profited from doing so. Indeed, not only is it possible to achieve long-range goals, it is necessary for success in life. To make a New Year's resolution is also to recognize the undeniable reality that secure finances, rewarding careers, and romances do not just happen automatically — that to get what we want in our lives, we must consciously choose and achieve the right goals. We must be goal-directed.

Unfortunately, a goal-directed orientation is missing to a large extent in too many lives. It is all too easy to live life passively, acting without carefully deciding what one is doing with one's life and why. How many people do you know who are in the career they fell into out of school, even if it is not very satisfying — or who have children at a certain age because that's what is expected, even if it's not what they really want — or who spend endless hours of "free time" in front of the TV, since that's the most readily available form of relaxation — or who follow a life routine that they never really chose and don't truly

enjoy, but which has the force of habit?

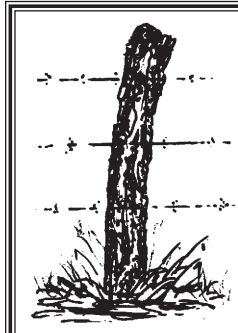
Too often, the goal-directedness embodied by New Year's resolutions is the exception in lives ruled by passively accepted forces — unexamined routine, short-range desires, or alleged duties. It is the passive approach to happiness that makes so many resolutions peter out, lost in the shuffle of life or abandoned due to lost motivation. More broadly than its impact on New Year's resolutions, the passive approach to happiness is the reason that so many go through life without ever getting — or even knowing — what they really want. It is a sad irony that those who write off New Year's resolutions because so many fail reinforces the passive approach to life that causes so many resolutions — and so many other

dreams — to fail. The solution to failed New Year's resolutions is not to abandon the practice, but to supplement it with a broader resolution — a commitment to a goal-directed life.

This New Year's, resolve to think about how to make your life better, not just once a year, but every day. Resolve to set goals, not just in one or two aspects of life, but in every important aspect and in your life as a whole. Resolve to pursue the goals that will make you successful and happy, not as the exception in a life of passivity, but as the rule that becomes second-nature.

If you do this, you will be resolving to do the most important thing of all: to take your happiness seriously.

Alex Epstein is an analyst at the Ayn Rand Center for Individual Rights.



The Learning Post

By Gordon Morrison
Concordia Rancher and
Former Agriculture Educator

Prepare Now For April Burning

As I travel down the highway with others in the car, I often hear the comment, "Wow, look at all those red cedars in that pasture."

Even though one has never burned pastures, this may be the year to do it. With grass waist-high and thick, there will be a lot of fuel, perhaps enough to get even the larger cedars to burn. More and more burning is being done in order to get rid of the weed trees such as red cedars, hedges, and thorny locusts that are competing strongly with the grasses for soil moisture and space. Pastures that are invaded by these trees are less desirable and thus the value of the pastures and even one's reputation as a good rancher decrease. Kansas is the prairie state — grasses, not trees.

One of the breakout sessions at the annual conference of the Kansas Association of Conservation Districts that I recently attended was on pasture burning. One of the main things stressed was to prepare well in advance for a burn and to have the fire controlling equipment ready. A big water tank with pump, hose, and nozzle mounted on a dependable truck should be ready to go. A torch to set the fires should be in working order to be carried on a four-wheeler mounted with a 25-gallon spot sprayer. If the acreage to be burned is large, several of these units are recommended, which is another reason for planning in advance with neighbors so that an experienced crew is ready for the job. The nurse tank should carry enough water to refill several times the small tanks on four-wheelers and the bigger tanks that hose down the back-fires or that stop or cool down fires that are threatening to break away. Quickly putting out fires that are starting to burn fence posts eliminates a lot of fence rebuilding.

A battle plan is a must so that everyone involved knows what pastures are to be burned, what hay bales and farmsteads are vulnerable, the culverts and narrow roads that might allow a fire to escape, what CRP or pastures are not to be burned and that must be back-burned to protect them. The back firing (or back burning) can actually be done weeks in advance, when the wind is in the right direction and blowing at just the right force — not too hard. Another procedure is to use a shredder to chop the tall growth of grass so the fire can be better contained. The fire and police departments should be informed of the plan for the controlled burn. For most ranchers who burn, the information I have included here is simply a review; and some could probably add more suggestions to this list.

I have burned quite a few pastures and will relate two of these experiences to show what a difference weather conditions can make in the ease and success of the burning. In

the first example, we were well prepared with crew and equipment but I had done no advance backfiring. On the appointed day, the crew arrived on schedule that morning with tanks/pumps, four-wheelers and torches. Soon we were back-firing to protect the neighbor's CRP that was not to be burned and also a pasture that was not in the burn plan. When we were about half finished on a mile stretch to be back-fired, the wind began to pick up speed and shifted to the opposite direction of what we needed. With excellent equipment and a fine, experienced crew, we fought the strong wind, high temperatures, and low humidity until noon. We had burned only 18 acres. Exhausted and disheartened, we decided to give up fighting the elements that day.

My experience last year was different. There was plenty of fuel in the pastures as the dead grass was one to two feet tall in places. The subsoil moisture was good. I observed the wind was about five m.p.h. The air temperature and humidity were ideal. I asked May if she would help me do some back-burning along the edge of the pastures adjoining the neighbors and the roadway. We had a four-wheeler loaded with a tank of water. I started the fire with matches and then spread it with a rake while May followed with a rubber flapper to make sure the fire didn't go toward the fence line. With weather conditions perfect, it was fast and easy; the fire made its own wind, and we just let it go ahead and burn. In a few hours, we had 600 acres burned. It was a near-perfect burn with no threat of a breakout.

These experiences have shown me that while one should plan in advance and be prepared for burning, another very important factor is the weather. Conditions must be right. When weather conditions are not good, even with the best of equipment and crew, it is a real struggle and almost an impossible task to get a good, safe burn. One has to be patient and wait for the right day weather-wise, which may not be a convenient time for the crew.

This year may be a good year to burn to reduce the weed tree population and to clear out old dead grass and weeds. I have never lost a fire, but some who have say it is very scary. Controlled burns are helpful, but we must exercise caution. Smoke blowing across a highway can be dangerous for travelers on that road, so one must pick the right day when the wind is compatible. Your county agent can be of assistance in providing information on burning and even loaning small equipment such as drip torches.

To stop people from snickering about your tree-ridden pasture, do it cheaply and easily with fire. Good luck.



Over the Barn Gate

By Beth Gaines-Riffel

"We're so busy watching out for what's just ahead of us that we don't take time to enjoy where we are."

— From Calvin & Hobbes

That's kind of how I felt last week. The "national" media of every stripe was busy informing their readers and watchers about the impending gloom and doom of the coming months — thanks to the current economic situation (I avow to refrain from dubbing it a crisis) — the morning news programs were giving tips on reducing debts, developing budgets and showing the buying public how to get more for less. Oh, let me not forget that those segments were alternated with the "new year" diet and exercise tidbits. And it was about 15 minutes into this depressing scenario that I looked out my kitchen window and realized that it was late December and there was a glorious day to be had.

I knew full-well that the short-sleeve weather we were blessed with would be short-lived. I also acknowledged that when the temperature did return to "normal" it would feel much colder than what it actually was.

After prodding my kids to abandon their newly acquired Christmas electronics, we took to the yard for a bit of fresh air and exercise.

There was the opportunity to do some barn renovations and clean-up around the yard — which somehow hadn't gotten accomplished before Thanksgiving. Better late than never, I say.

I keep coming back to that little saying by the cartoon characters that I started this column with. It really is true — that sometimes we all are quite guilty of missing out on the good stuff in life because we stew about things that may or may not even come to pass.

When most of you receive this edition of Grass & Grain in the mail, the Topeka Farm Show will have started. It runs Tuesday through Thursday and this year marks the 20th anniversary of the event. G&G has been a long-time participant in the January ritual. Once again we will have a small token of appreciation for those of you who stop by our booth and renew a subscription. We look forward to visiting with our readers and hearing what is going on out in the country that might make interesting fodder for a future article in the paper.

Renee Whitney who is the editor of the Women's Page of the paper, will be in the booth on Tuesday afternoon from 1-3. She'd be glad to sign copies of the newest cookbook edition that we have for sale.

That's about it for now. I hope you'll take the opportunity to come to Topeka and see what's goin' on outside your window. I'll chat with you next week, "Over the Barn Gate!"



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Session focuses on effectively managing grazing resources

Continued from page 1

today. If you don't need phosphorus, you can't afford to put it on but if you need it, it has to be there to get the most out of your nitrogen."

Putting on only the amount of fertilizer that is required is important, he stressed, adding that producers need to be realistic about yield goals. Kilgore pointed out that approximately 40 pounds of nitrogen is required to produce 2000 pounds of dry matter. For cool season pastures, he suggested an N rate of around 50 pound but noted that, because forage utilization is higher in haying situations, a rate of 70-80 pounds of nitrogen is appropriate for hay meadows.

Ely

Continued from page 1

Ely's flock grew from her two-head gift to 42 ewes and two rams today.

When asked about the process of being selected as a national winner, she noted that it was a bit unnerving.

"There were other finalists that had a lot more background and prestige connected with their flocks. But the fact that this was a program that I built is something I was really proud of," she explained.

The process of being selected as national proficiency winner required Ely to submit an extensive application which included financial information on her sheep business, illustrating the hours she worked in the business and investment and growth of the program as well the leadership given.

Kirkham also spoke to producers about KRC's Clean Water Farms Project. The initiative includes a whole farm self-environmental assessment focusing on the impact of farm activities on water quality. The River Friendly Farm Environmental Assessment covers a wide range of issues, from farm and family goals to the effect of management practices on resources.

"We want you to rate where you are right now, where you'd like to be, and then develop a plan of action on how to get there," Kirkham explained.

Because of the educational value of simply completing the assessment, producers receive \$250 for their participation.

"It really opens your eyes," commented Don Walenta, a Butler County rancher, who attended the workshop. "I got a lot of value out of filling it out. When I was done I felt like I should have paid them for the opportunity. It makes you think about your land and how you manage it."

The Clean Water Farms Project also promotes water quality protection through workshops, field days or farm tours and cost share assistance for approved water quality projects within selected WRAPS Watersheds. (WRAPS stands for Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy; KRC works in over a dozen of these around the state.)

Paul Ingle, watershed hydrologist for Flint Hills RC&D, discussed funding sources for landowners interested in conservation projects. Traditional programs, he noted, include the Natural Resource and Conservation Service and local conservation districts. Throughout much of eastern Kansas, Ingle said, WRAPS watersheds offer cost share money as do groups such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ducks Unlimited and Quail Unlimited.

Ingle said projects that take land out of crop production and put it into permanent vegetative cover are frequently eligible for assistance, as are practices which

exclude animals from fragile riparian areas.

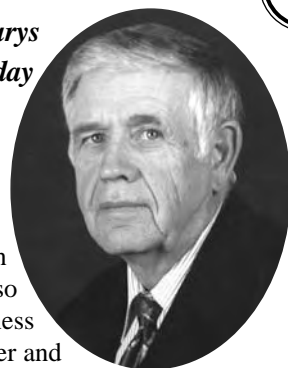
The Emporia workshop included a grazer's panel featuring Lyon County beef producers Jeff Houck and Ken Reed. Houck discussed his cow/calf enterprise, focusing on the operation's efforts to minimize the use of harvested forages through alternative forages.

Reed, a backgrounder, outlined ranch projects to

protect water quality, including fencing ponds and creeks, and relocating cattle pens to less sensitive areas.

The workshop was sponsored by the Kansas Rural Center, Flint Hills RC&D, Melvern WRAPS Watershed, Frontier Farm Credit, Lyon County K-State Extension, the Lyon County Conservation District and NRCS, and Lyon County Farm Bureau.

Everett Hoobler of St. Marys celebrated his 80th birthday on January 4, 2009



He retired from managing the John Deere and Valley Irrigation Departments for Farmers Union Co-op after more than 30 years of service. He was also owner of a well drilling business and still works as an auctioneer and in real estate sales.

Hoobler has been a frequent advertiser in Grass & Grain for more than 40 years. Alex Goldberger, a well-known G&G salesman, gave him the nickname — Ol' Ev — by which he is known throughout the Midwest.

"I don't think I could have been as successful as I have been without Grass & Grain," Hoobler said. "With running John Deere, the auction business and real estate, I doubt I missed a week in the paper. In fact my February 28th auction will be advertised in Grass & Grain."

Hoobler started his auctioneering career in 1946 as a senior in high school.

"I was self taught," he said. "My first auction was in Grove, Ks. It was a relief sale for World War II. We sold chickens and anything else people gave us."

Everett plans to celebrate his birthday at a later date with family and friends. Cards may be sent to him at 411 Durink, St. Marys, KS 66536.

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**Marcia Emig, Goodland:
SAUCY CAULIFLOWER**

2 heads cauliflower
1/3 cup oleo
3 tablespoons flour
6-ounce package Italian salad dressing, dry
2 cups milk
1/2 cup sharp cheddar cheese, shredded
2 egg yolks
1/2 cup almonds, toasted

Cook cauliflower for 15 minutes; drain. Place on platter. Melt oleo and stir in flour and salad dressing. Add the milk. Cook and stir until sauce is thick and smooth. Stir in cheese until melted. Stir small amount of hot mixture into beaten eggs in small bowl. Blend into hot mixture and pour over cauliflower. Sprinkle with almonds.

**Kellee Rogers, Topeka:
WHITE CHOCOLATE
PEPPERMINT SCONES**

2 cups flour
1/3 cup sugar
1 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/4 teaspoon salt
6 tablespoons shortening
3/4 cup white chocolate morsels
2 tablespoons crushed peppermints
3/4 cup buttermilk
1 egg yolk
1 teaspoon vanilla

In a bowl combine flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda and salt. Using a pastry blender cut in shortening until mixture is crumbly. Stir in chocolate and peppermints. Spoon dry ingredients into bowl. Add buttermilk, egg yolk and vanilla, stirring just until dry ingredients are moistened. On lightly floured surface, roll out dough to 1/2 inch thickness.

Using a 2-inch round cutter, cut out scones. Place on a baking sheet sprayed with nonstick spray. Bake at 400 degrees for 14 to 16 minutes or until lightly browned.

Roni Caffrey, Hesston:
“With the corn and bean addition to this recipe, all that is needed to complete this meal is a salad and bread! Easy preparation for a busy holiday cook!”

TEX-MEX LASAGNA

2 cups cooked, chopped chicken
1/4 cup fresh cilantro
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 jalapeno, seeded & chopped
15-ounce can corn, drained
15-oz. can black beans, drained
29 ounces tomato sauce
10-ounce can diced tomatoes with green chilies, drained
2 teaspoons cumin
1 teaspoon chili powder
1 teaspoon salt
6 lasagna noodles, uncooked
16 ounces sour cream
8 oz. cream cheese, softened
8 oz. grated pepper jack cheese
8 oz. grated cheddar cheese

Combine chicken, cilantro, garlic, jalapeno, corn, beans, tomato sauce, tomatoes and spices until blended; set aside. Combine sour cream and softened cream cheese until smooth; set aside. In a lightly greased 9-by-13-inch pan, layer in the following order:

1/3 sauce
3 lasagna noodles
1/2 sour cream mixture
1/3 sauce
1/2 cheeses
3 noodles
1/2 sour cream
1/3 sauce
1/2 cheeses

Bake in a 350-degree oven for 35-45 minutes. Let rest for 10 minutes before serving.

**Sandy Hill, Eskridge:
EASY CHILI RELLENOS**

2 teaspoons butter, softened
7-oz. can whole green chiles, drained & cut in strips
8-ounce package shredded cheddar cheese
8-ounce package shredded Monterey jack cheese
14 1/2-oz. can stewed tomatoes
4 eggs, beaten
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
3/4 cup evaporated milk

Spread butter in slow-cooker. Layer chiles and cheeses; add tomatoes. Stir together eggs, flour and milk and pour into slow-cooker. Cover and cook on high setting for 2 to 3 hours. Serves 6.

**Mary Rogers, Topeka:
CREAM OF
ASPARAGUS SOUP**

(2) 12-ounce packages frozen cut asparagus
1/4 cup butter
2 tablespoons flour
4 cups milk
1 cup shredded Monterey jack cheese
4 or 5 drops hot pepper sauce
1 1/2 teaspoons salt
3/4 teaspoon pepper

Prepare asparagus according to package; drain and set aside. In a large pan melt butter. Stir in flour and gradually add milk. Bring to a boil and cook and stir for 2 minutes or until thick. Cool slightly. Pour half of the milk mixture into blender and half of the asparagus. Cover and process until blended. Strain and discard pulp, return soup to the saucepan. Repeat with the remaining milk mixture and asparagus. Stir in the cheese, sauce, salt and pepper; heat through but don't boil. Makes 6 servings.

**Millie Conger, Tecumseh:
ORANGE PECAN COOKIES**

1 cup butter
1 1/4 cups brown sugar
1 tablespoon orange zest
2 tablespoons orange juice
3 cups flour
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
48 pecan halves

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Spray baking sheets with cooking spray. In a bowl beat butter and sugar until fluffy. Beat in orange zest and orange juice until combined. In another bowl combine flour, baking soda, baking powder and salt. Gradually add to butter mixture, beating until combined. Roll dough into 1" balls. Gently press pecan half in center of each ball. Bake 10-12 minutes or until edges are lightly browned. Let cool on pans for 2 minutes; remove and cool completely on wire racks.

Marlene Swisher, Reading: “This is a good recipe for leftover turkey. Much better than a cold turkey sandwich for supper.”

HOT TURKEY SANDWICHES

2 cups cubed turkey
1/2 cup chopped celery
1/3 cup mayonnaise
1 cup cubed process American cheese
Salt & pepper to taste
Hamburger buns

In a greased 1 1/2-quart baking dish, combine the turkey, celery, mayonnaise, cheese, salt and pepper; stir well. Cover and bake at 450 degrees for 35 to 40 minutes or until celery is tender. Toast buns.

Free Online Recipe

Included as part of *Grass & Grain's* website is a “Free Weekly Recipe.” You need not be a subscriber to view this recipe. Go to: www.grassandgrain.com and at the bottom left click on Our Daily Bread Free Weekly Recipe.

Some recipes will be selected from submissions received from area cooks while others may be suggested favorites. You may also share the recipe with friends and family by clicking on the “email page” button.

This week's recipe is Chocolate Bread from Millie Conger, Tecumseh

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2. Be sure your name, address and phone number are on the entry. Please include a street address with your recipe entries. A post office box number is not sufficient for prize delivery. Allow 3-4 weeks for delivery. 3. Send it to: Woman's Page Editor, *Grass & Grain*, Box 1009, Manhattan, KS 66505. OR e-mail at: agpress2@agpress.com

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pump 22; 20. Smith & Wesson 44 magnum revolver; 21. Colt PTFa Frontier Scout 62 w/ 2 cylinders; 22. High Way Patrol Special 32 revolver; 23. Smith & Wesson 32 revolver; 24. Fabrique National Darnes Deguerre Browning Pat) 38 pistol; Large assortment of ammo inc.: 243, 200, 30-30, 357 magnum, 22, 44, 12 ga, 16 ga, 20 ga, 28 ga, 410; reloader & table; hunting equipment inc.: target shooter; targets; gun box; walnut 8 gun cabinet; traps; knives; Tasco & Bushnell binoculars; metal ammo boxes; bow; 24th edition Gun Values; fishing equipment; duck decoys; fishing rods; 26 deer antlers; 11 single antlers; camp stoves.

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Plains market farmers to examine changing times at 2009 conference

Changing times are part of the program agenda for the 2009, five-state Great Plains Vegetable Growers Conference, scheduled for Jan. 8-10. The annual event itself will be in a new location — St. Joseph, Mo., at the Fulkerson Conference Center of Missouri Western State University.

The event will offer workshop options for the first day. One Jan. 9 session will cover high-tunnel production and the other, the community-supported agriculture (CSA) approach to marketing.

"At least the conference name is the same. But, it's also not quite accurate anymore," said Ted Carey, vegetable crops specialist with Kansas State University Research and Extension.

The name implies the event is just for experienced growers, Carey explained. But, parts of this year's conference should be equally useful for people who are just thinking about getting into the business of growing and/or marketing fresh produce.

"The conference is also for both organic and conventional growers. In other words, there's something for everyone," he said.

As its name states, the '09 program addresses the interests and concerns of vegetable growers. It also will focus on small fruits, cut flowers, greenhouses, farmers markets, ethnic markets and more.

"For example, a day-long track of farmer's market sessions on Saturday will provide information for both new and experienced vendors. Another noteworthy track will be that of Eric and Anne Nordell, nationally recognized producers from Pennsylvania who largely conduct their successful weed management

practices with horse-drawn implements," Carey said.

Working in concert with state and national grower associations, the conference's long-time organizers are the Extension Divisions of six universities: Iowa State, Kansas State, Missouri, Missouri Western, Nebraska, and South Dakota State.

Experienced growers, researchers and university specialists from those states make up the majority of the program's session leaders.

An associated trade show is always popular with conference participants, Carey said. And, the Fulkerson Conference Center will provide expanded space for vendors to display equipment, tools, seeds and other inputs.

The required pre-registration for either of the Jan. 8 workshops is \$50, due by Dec. 26. The cost for Jan. 9 and 10 is \$35 per day by Dec. 26 and \$40 thereafter.

For the first time, participants can register on the Web, as well as by mail, he said. A full program, driving directions, and registration instructions are posted on-line at http://extension.missouri.edu/buchanan/GP_VGC.shtml.

Or, further information is available by phoning Katie Cook or Tom Fowler at 816-279-1691.

The high tunnel workshop will feature Bob Muth of Williamstown, N.J., who will discuss how he uses the unheated greenhouse structures on his farm and detail the difference they made for his CSA operation after hail storms. Mike Bollinger of the Heritage Prairie Market in Elburn, Ill., will discuss using moveable high tunnels to maximize year-round production.

Tom Ruggieri and Rebecca Graff of Fair Share Farm near Kearney, Mo., will join other experienced growers in presenting Thursday's CSA mini-school. They will provide detailed information on all aspects of starting and running a CSA in order to market farm products directly.

"I'd recommend that participants register early, though, even if they don't plan to attend a Day 1 workshop. We generally have long lines of people who decide to register at the door on conference Friday, and this year's program seems likely to attract even more participants than usual," Carey said.

National FFA convention will rotate

The National FFA Organization announced recently that its annual convention will rotate between Louisville, Ky., and Indianapolis, Ind., for the foreseeable future.

Starting in 2013, Louisville will share hosting duties with Indianapolis on a three-year rotational basis. Louisville will host the convention 2013 through 2015. The convention will return to Indianapolis for the years 2016 through 2018. Louisville will then be given the first right of option for the years 2019-2021; Indianapolis will have the option for 2022-2024. FFA CEO and National FFA Advisor Dr. Larry Case was appreciative of both cities' efforts.

"Both cities have welcomed FFA with outstanding hospitality," said Case. "Indianapolis and Louisville have both proven their ability to put on a world-class event for our members, advisors and guests."

National FFA President Paul Moya said, "I'm confident that our members will look forward to experiencing both unique cities during their high school years."

"We welcome FFA back to Louisville with open arms," said Louisville Mayor Jerry Abramson. "Our city has so much to offer these young men and women from top-notch hotel accommodations to entertainment and, soon, a new downtown arena. FFA's homecoming is great news for Louisville at a time when a sour economy has been grabbing headlines."

"It's great news to learn that Indianapolis has once again been selected to host the national FFA convention," said Indianapolis Mayor Greg Ballard. "The positive impact of this event and these outstanding young people on our city is undeniable."

The annual national FFA convention, which was previously held in Louisville from 1999 through 2005 and is currently under contract with Indianapolis through 2012, hosts more than 54,000 high school-aged FFA members from across the country. The return of this prestigious event—the nation's largest annual youth gathering—will bring both cities estimated annual revenue exceeding \$40 million.

'Cover Your Acres' ag conference set for Jan. 20-21

The 2009 Cover Your Acres Winter Conference is slated for Jan. 20-21 at the Gateway Civic Center in Oberlin. The conference will be held for two days with the same program on both days.

The event, sponsored by Kansas State University Research and Extension and the Northwest Kansas Crop Residue Alliance, will feature presentations focusing on the latest technology, methods, and conservation practices to improve crop production on the High Plains.

Some of the breakout topics to be covered include: Weed Strategies in Grain Sorghum; Wheat

Residue Management; Crop Insurance; Grain Marketing Strategies; Advances in Breeding Technology; Carbon Credit Trading; Yield Forecasts from Satellite Images; Glyphosate Resistance; Plant Nutrition; Advances in Breeding Technology; Oilseed Production, Marketing and Storage; and Pros and Cons of UAN (urea-ammonium nitrate) with Herbicides for Wheat.

Refreshments and heavy hors d'oeuvres will be available as participants take part in an industry-sponsored "Bull Session" as they view the exhibits.

An early registration fee of \$22 (for the day of one's choice) is payable by Jan.

13. After that date and at the door, the fee is \$45. All registrations include the conference proceedings, refreshments and a noon meal.

Continuing education credits are available for crop consultants and commercial pesticide applicators.

Corporate sponsors for the Cover Your Acres Win-

ter Conference include Hoxie Implement; Lang Diesel; National Sunflower Association; McCook National Bank; Pioneer Hi-Bred; Producers Cooperative Oil Mill; Monsanto; and Farm Credit of Western Kansas.

More information is available by calling (785) 462-6281 or email bolson@ksu.edu.



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Mo. agribusiness unit returns from Afghanistan

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. (AP) — Tears of joy and relief flowed freely as a Missouri National Guard unit came home just in time for Christmas from a pioneering mission in Afghanistan.

Although technically designated as part of the 95th Aviation Support Battalion, the 47 soldiers who arrived in Springfield are better known as the Missouri National Guard Agribusiness Development Team.

They deployed in January with a mission of helping revive a farm sector that employs over 70 percent of the Afghan population and has been devastated by war and upheaval. Similar National Guard units have since formed in other farm states and headed for Afghanistan.

Afghanistan's cultivation of opium poppies exploded in recent years, and the Agribusiness Development Team worked to wean Afghan farmers off the illegal crop and guide them toward growing legitimate crops such as wheat.

Lt. Col. Greg Allison, commander of the team, was overwhelmed with emotion as he thanked the soldiers for putting their lives on the

line in Afghanistan. He also commended them on a job well done.

"No task was too difficult for them," he told their family and friends at the ceremony at Springfield's National Guard Armory. "Their courage and resolve continued. ... They never lost focus and they remained diligent."

Maj. Gen. King Sidwell, adjutant general of the Missouri National Guard, spoke of the team's success in Afghanistan.

"What you have been doing has historic proportions," he said.

History was beside the point Wednesday for Lathrop resident Pam Barber as she tearfully embraced her son, 22-year-old Sgt. Will Allen. Barber and her husband, Brian, and a dozen other family members sported "Welcome Home Will" T-shirts.

"This is absolutely my best present ever," Pam Barber said. "It's great to be back," said her son as he held his younger brother. "I've been waiting for this since the day I left. It's the best Christmas present ever. I couldn't ask for anything else — there's nothing else I could want."

Master Sgt. Larry Godsey's wife was on hand to greet him and planned a Christmas surprise for their children, who hadn't been told their dad was coming home.

Godsey said the work in Afghanistan was rewarding. The unit's tasks included building wells, which earned deep appreciation from Afghan villagers, he said.

"They were so proud of it, they were sleeping right next to the well to make sure animals didn't get into it," Godsey said of one such project. When the Missourians returned to inspect the well, villagers wanted to put on a feast for them, he said.

The Missouri Agribusiness Development Team was pilot program developed through a partnership of the National Guard Bureau, the University of Missouri and the Missouri Farm Bureau.

Projects in Afghanistan included water management, soil enhancement, crop cultivation and improving the delivery and marketing of goods.

Team members brought a

wide variety of expertise in farming, veterinary medicine, hydrology, soil science and engineering as well as marketing.

U.S. officials believe revitalizing Afghanistan's agricultural economy while weakening the role of poppy cultivation will help stabilize the country.

"Our long-term strategy is to help make things better over there, so we're especially proud of the Missouri National Guard for being the first to do that," said Capt. Mike Seek.

Kansas 511: valuable info for winter travels

When travelers take to the road this winter, the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) encourages them to be prepared for winter driving conditions.

Before traveling, be informed about weather and road conditions. Call 511 anytime from any phone in Kansas or 1-866-511-KDOT (5368) from anywhere in the U.S. to find out about the latest driving conditions for the Kansas Turnpike and any Interstate, U.S. or state highway in Kansas and Nebraska. Information is provided free from a landline phone; however, for cellular phone users, cell minutes may apply but there should be no roaming fee.

Road information can also be obtained by visiting the 511 Travel Information website at <http://511.ksdot.org>. The site also provides links to other information, such as Closed Roads and Driving Conditions Lists, weather, travel information for other states and more. Travelers can also use their handheld mobile devices such as Smartphones or Blackberries to access a text report for construction project information by visiting <http://511mm.ksdot.org>.

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World-record soybean producer extends 100-plus per bushel production to commercial fields

Kip Cullers of K&K Farms in Purdy, Mo., impressed the agricultural world the previous two years by smashing soybean production records with yields of 139 bushels per acre in 2006 and 154 bushels per acre in 2007. In 2008, he didn't break his own record yields, but accomplished another advancement by surpassing 100-bushel yields consistently across large fields, not just contest plots.

"I had an 85-acre irrigated field yield 103 bushels per acre and another 160-acre field make 106 bushels per acre," notes Kip Cullers. "We're managing our non-contest fields a lot like our contest beans, which has boosted yields."

Cullers' contest entry for the Missouri Soybean Association (MSA) yield contest — 117 bushels per acre with Pioneer® brand 94B73 (RR) soybean variety — was still enough to win the contest for the third year in a row. It was in the MSA contest that Cullers set and broke soybean yield records. Cullers continues to hold the world record for soybean yields with his 2007 yield of 154 bushels with Pioneer soybean variety 94M80 (RR).

"I like to challenge myself to do better every year," says Cullers. "The weather this year didn't cooperate for a world record breaker — too many cool and wet days. However, we are very pleased with the yields we achieved."

The 100-plus bushel, non-contest soybean fields, planted to Pioneer soybean variety 94B73 for seed production, were irrigated and yield averages include the non-irrigated corners. Test plots on Cullers' farm

for Pioneer Y Series soybeans also yielded more than 100 bushels per acre, even with less-than-ideal weather conditions to start the 2008 growing season.

"While world records are gratifying, averaging 100 bushels or better on the larger soybean production acreage is even more exciting," says Cullers. "It's important to put the right genetics on the right field, and incorporating management practices across the board has helped us reach and maintain higher yields."

"Reaching these yield levels continues to support that it's a new day for soybeans, with yields moving dramatically higher with these new products," says Dale R. Ludwig, MSA executive director/CEO. "This puts the spotlight on production management practices and the latest genetics."

Cullers' attention to detail and proactive management style helped him achieve his high yields. He monitors his fields closely to check for production challenges, such as disease and insects. Cullers says a good fungicide program is critical to growing quality crops, as are good genetics.

Cullers co-owns and operates a diversified farm, K&K Farms, located southeast of Joplin, Mo. Cullers has been involved in farming for more than 20 years, owning or managing farms in Newton and Barry counties in Missouri. He manages more than 5,000 acres of corn, soybeans, green beans and greens — spinach, collard, kale, mustard and turnip. The farming operation is located in Missouri's fertile Newtonia red soil. K&K Farms also includes beef, hay and poultry.

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The scholarships are provided through the Daughters of American Agriculture Foundation, created to honor the memory of those courageous and adventuresome pioneer women who played such an important role in the founding of this nation, and to encourage the present generation to continue their education in agricultural pursuits. Funding for the foundation was provided by Jean and Calvin Ibendahl, who farmed near Tamaroa, Illinois, and from farm families around the country who pitched in "dollars for daughters."

The Jean Ibendahl Scholarship was initiated in 1991 by AAW member and educator Jean Ibendahl. It was later supported by a generous endowment of \$10,000 by Jean and her husband Calvin. It is further maintained by donations by AAW member and affiliates. This scholarship is available to high school graduates and women aged 18-23.

The Sister Thomas More Bertels Scholarship was begun in 1991 to honor a founding mother of AAW. Sister T. More Bertels was a history teacher at Silver Lake College in Manitowoc, Wisc. She traveled the United States and Canada extolling the virtues of agri-

culture and empowering producers to realize their potential. This scholarship is available to women who are returning students in agriculture and are 24 years old or older.

An applicant must be a farmer, rancher or be the wife, daughter or other close relative of a farmer, rancher or other person employed in agriculture. She must have knowledge of or work experience in agriculture and show an economic or financial need. Grade Point Average or placement on tests are considered. Applications for each are due by June 1st of each year. A copy of the applications and the submission information may be found on the AAW website (www.americanagriwomen.org).

For more information, contact Marcie Williams, President, president@americanagriwomen.org, or visit the web site at www.americanagriwomen.org.

USDA cancels mandatory registration directive

Just over a month after R-CALF USA sent a formal letter to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service-Veterinary Services (APHIS-VS) demanding that the agency retract Memorandum No. 575.19 issued on Sept. 22, 2008, APHIS-VS officially canceled that particular memo on Dec. 22, 2008.

Memorandum 575.19 mandated premises registration under the National Animal Identification System (NAIS) for producers engaged in interstate commerce and who participate in any one of the dozen or more federally regulated disease programs.

R-CALF USA told the agency in its Nov. 10, 2008, letter that the memo "constitutes an unlawful, final regulatory action initiated and implemented without public notice or opportunity for comment, as required by the Administrative Procedure Act," and must be retracted.

"We caught USDA in the unlawful act of trying to convert what was promised to be a completely voluntary animal identification system into a mandatory NAIS, and the agency backed down," said R-CALF USA President/Region VI Director Max Thornsberry, a Missouri veterinarian who also chairs the group's animal health committee. "This goes to show how an organized group of cattle producers can effectively defend their rights if they stand and fight together."

The cancellation memorandum issued by APHIS-VS on Dec. 22, 2008, states, "VS Memorandum No. 575.19 dated September 22, 2008, is hereby canceled."

"This action by USDA confirms what we've been saying all along that USDA does not have the authority to implement NAIS and it is using underhanded and unlawful

methods to coerce independent cattle producers into giving up their rights to their property," said Kenny Fox, who chairs the group's animal identification committee.

"R-CALF USA encourages producers to not register their premises under the NAIS and to immediately request that their names and property be removed from the NAIS database if they had previously registered under USDA's coercive actions," Fox urged.

The new APHIS-VS memo further states that APHIS-VS "has an established procedure for producers who request their premises record be removed from the NAIS premises databases."

R-CALF USA advocates that USDA should use and improve existing disease traceback methods including state-sanctioned brand programs that do not require individual producers to register their property under a national premises registration program.

"There is no need to violate producers' private property rights to accomplish this objective, we will continue to work to improve our existing systems, but we will not tolerate the type of government intrusion on our industry that USDA envisioned with NAIS," Fox concluded.

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Young stockmen graduate from academy

The 2008 class of the KLA Young Stockmen's Academy (YSA) graduated December 5 at the KLA Convention. Fort Dodge Animal Health partnered with KLA to host 20 members for a series of four seminars throughout the year.

During the first session, attendees were exposed to the legislative process, media and services provided by KLA. Interview training, presented by KLA staff and WIBW-Topeka farm broadcasters Kelly Lenz and Greg Akagi, illustrated the importance of beef producers becoming advocates and delivering a positive message on behalf of their industry. The group visited KLA headquarters and participated in a financial planning seminar, led by Kennedy and Coe, LLC, that focused on debt management and planning for the future of the family business. The class toured the Capitol and attended a Senate Agriculture Committee meeting. Attendees also took part in KLA's legislative meeting, where they and other members determined positions on individual bills under consideration by the Kansas Legislature. The second installment took the group to western Kansas where they spent two days touring beef operations to gain a better understanding of various industry segments. Pratt Livestock was the first stop on the tour. Auction Market Manager Jake Lewis and National Animal Identification System Program Manager Bryan Rickard visited with YSA members about the importance of age and source verification and premises registration. Jeff Sternberger hosted the group at Midwest Feeders near Ingalls.

Sternberger gave an overview of the feeding industry and explained some of the challenges cattle feeders face today, including high fuel and feed costs.

Participants also made a stop at Pelton Simmental/Red Angus near Burdett. Lynn Pelton gave the group a glimpse into his progressive seedstock operation, which uses superior genetics to produce high-quality beef. To see firsthand how beef is processed and readied for delivery to the world's consumers, YSA members also toured the National Beef plant at Dodge City. YSA members went to the Kansas City area for the third tour of the year.

Fort Dodge Animal Health hosted the class at its offices in Overland Park. Fort Dodge Senior Marketing Manager Paul Parker and Vice President of Livestock & Equine Business Scott Bormann gave the group an inside look at the company and the animal health industry. To gain a better understanding of the link between the processing plant and the consumer's plate, the group toured SYSCO Food Services and Bichelmeyer Meats. SYSCO distributes high-end beef cuts to restaurants across

the U.S from 78 distribution centers.

Bichelmeyer Meats is a family-owned business consisting of a small processing facility and a butcher shop, which offers fresh beef and pork to customers daily. YSA members further saw how beef is marketed in the meatcase with stops at Hen House Market and Whole Foods Market. The group also toured the Kansas City Board of Trade and heard from staff at Bartlett and Company about cattle and grain risk management.

The final YSA session took place at the KLA Convention held December 3-5 in Wichita, which provided participants the opportunity to interact with KLA members from every segment of the industry. YSA members got a firsthand look into the inner workings of the association by attending the KLA board meeting. The group also took part in the policy process, attending committee and council meetings where members discussed issues affecting their business interests. The 2008



2008 YSA Participants include (Back Row, L to R) Ryan Parker, El Dorado; Todd Strahm, Sabetha; Rick Nelson, Parker; Billy Harris, Manhattan; Ben Stromgren, Osage City; Ryan Breiner, Manhattan; Mark Huseman, Ellsworth; Phillip Goodyear, Junction City; Rodney Derstein, Manhattan; Levi Ebert, Saint George; Aaron Cross, Lewis; (Front Row, L to R) Justin Struthers, Clearwater; Heath Stuewe, Paxico; Guy Bracken, Clearwater; Shilo Eggers, Humboldt; Philip Weltmer, Smith Center; and Brandon New, Leavenworth. (Not pictured are Rob Holland, Bucyrus; Janet Phillips, Cherryvale; and Corey Brasher, Pratt.)

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boldt; Phillip Goodyear, Junction City; Billy Harris, Manhattan; Rob Holland, Bucyrus; Mark Huseman, Ellsworth; Rick Nelson, Parker; Brandon New, Leavenworth; Ryan Parker, El

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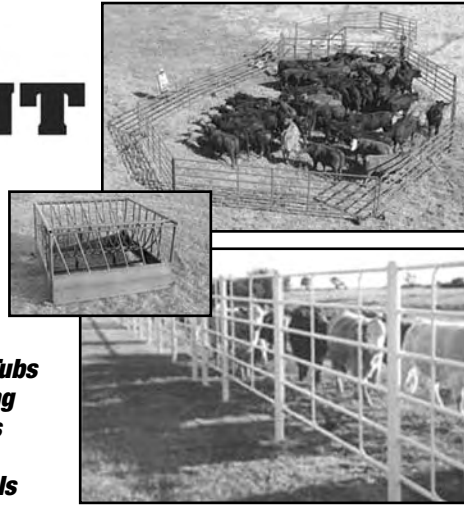
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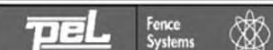
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Horsin' Around

By Don Coldsmith



New Beginnings

It's time for a new year to begin. They certainly pass in a hurry, it seems. One of these days we'll have to take down the Christmas tree and tuck away all that goes with the wonderful season.

But first, we celebrate New Year's Day. Probably every civilization or culture, every primitive group of any kind, has marked the passing of time with some sort of a ceremony. Often, a religious ceremony.

It's no coincidence that nearly all of the various dates for the New Year have fallen on or near one of the

annual events of the solar calendar. There must be something to count from, an even that can be anticipated and relied upon to recur with regularity. There are four of these times, as the earth spins and revolves around the sun: The longest day of the year, the shortest, and the two days in spring and fall when the hours of light and darkness are equal. Any and all of these events have been used by somebody as the start of a New Year. They still are, somewhere. Even now, when most of the world is using the Gregorian calen-

dar, there are celebrations and ceremonies to mark the changes.

In most cases, the New Year is linked to a new beginning of some sort. Maybe, as in our own, to a look back, too ... a review of events, an evaluation, a change. We need, sometimes, to have an opportunity to "turn over a new leaf," to look ahead, as well as back at some of our mistakes, pleasures, triumphs, and tragedies. This makes it appropriate that our New Year begins with January. Our months and days of the week are named after an

amazing assortment of pagan gods and Roman emperors. In this case, Janus, the Roman god of "gates, doors, beginnings, and endings." Janus had two faces, and could look backward as well as forward (That must have been confusing. Bifocals are bad enough).

January, of course, is linked to the shortest day of the year in the northern hemisphere, where human populations are largest. It misses the actual shortest day by a few. But, the celebration broadens out a bit, too, to include the Christmas season and the surrounding "twelve days." The old Julian calendar, similar to our present one, and in use until the 18th century, celebrated New Year's Day on January 14th.

One of the most ancient observations of the New Year was in Egypt. It coin-

cided fairly closely with the longest day of the year, the Summer Solstice. At this time, the annual flooding of the Nile River occurs, with the associated agricultural activity. A logical event, to associate with a new beginning.

Many widely different cultures have observed the beginning of new growth in the spring as the birth of a New Year. These include such widely different cultures as the Druids of Britain, and the widely varying cultures of the American Indians. We occasionally receive a New Year's card in March from a friend who is a member of the Blackfeet Nation. They observe the time of "awakening."

Christianity has sometimes used March dates for the New Year's beginning, associating them with Easter, the Resurrection, and

the Fest of the Annunciation.

Jewish tradition follows the celebration of the harvest season. The Jewish New Year, Yom Kippur, is based on the Autumn Equinox, which occurs in late September. A great many other cultures also celebrate a Fall festival, but without the New Year connotation. Our Thanksgiving, for example.

One notable exception to all of this for thousands of years was in the Orient. The ancient Chinese calendar was based not on the sun, but the moon's cycles. This led to a twelve-year cycle, and they still observe the Year of the Horse, the Tiger, the Rat, etc. For practical purposes, though, China and Japan use the Gregorian calendar, and celebrate January First as New Year's Day.

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Hey Neighbor For The Love Of Horses

By Frank J. Buchman

Ranch Life Makes Little Cowgirl And Cowboy Into Champions

Riding on the ranch is what makes horses, cowboys and cowgirls.

"I help Dad doctor cattle all of the time. That's the best practice for me and my horse, Trigger," insisted 11-year-old Cooper Martin.

"I help too. Cactus and I check, sort and assist with moving cattle around to different pastures," quickly added seven-year-old sister Caxton.

"When Chris was injured this spring, Cooper and Caxton had to take over a lot of the work," inserted mom Candi Martin. "They're a lot better than I am."

"I really appreciate the help these kids give me checking, sorting out and doctoring cattle. It's what we do every day here, and I wouldn't get it all done without everybody's help," credited dad Chris Martin.

Life at the Diamond C Ranch near Alma in Wabaunsee County is a family cattle backgrounding operation each day. And, it doesn't change much on weekends, when all of the family loads horses in the gooseneck trailer and heads down the junior rodeo trail.

Homework has paid off in abundance. "It's different in the arena, but practice on the ranch has made us and our horses more comfortable and consistent," contended Cooper, who talked with an expertise and maturity of cowboys much older than he is.

Dividends are so numer-

ous, one trying to keep up with the accomplishments becomes readily confused.

Best way to wrap them up concisely is: Caxton has collected four trophy saddles along with several buckles, Cooper has won two saddles plus no less than 16 buckles, and the pair has uncountable other working awards, including but not limited to bridles, breast collars, blankets, etc.

As they personally put their own trophy saddles and tack on their favorite two horses out of six they use on the rodeo circuit, recent, and some would consider most elite, accomplishments are enthusiastically related, with each inserting complimentary details.

"We just got back from the National Finals Rodeo

in Las Vegas," Cooper explained. "Caxton was the reserve champion overall in the World's Championship Dummy Roping there. She roped 13 in a row before missing one, and a boy from Oklahoma caught 14, so ended up winning."

That is the highlight, but as impressive, Caxton was the top girl roper there, and Cooper was in the top five out of the 95 entered in the 9-to-11 boys group.

As importantly, it wasn't just happenstance, or beginner's luck. The Martins are repeat competitors and previous winners in the open-to-the-world contest, where youth rope steer horns mounted on hay bales.

Without getting into all of the technicalities, Candi explained, "The contestants



Chris and Candi Martin and their children, Caxton and Cooper, mounted on Cactus and Trigger, talked about life at their Diamond C Ranch near Alma. Horses are trained and ridden in the cattle operation making them better on the road at junior rodeos throughout the Midwest, where many championships have been collected by the young cowgirl and cowboy.

roped different width horns with up to a five-foot spread. On top of that, each time a roper caught, they moved farther back from the dummy." Past world champions served as judges.

Additionally, the Martins

competed in a dummy roping event in conjunction with the Speed Williams Match Roping at South Point Casino. Caxton won her age group, and Cooper placed third in his category.

How do these youngsters get so good? "Practice,"

they quickly agreed. "I rope every day," Cooper readily commented. "I have to catch ten in a row, and if I rope them the first time, that's it. Sometimes, if I'm having a bad day, it'll take quite a few more throws."

Caxton follows the same

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routine, but probably throws more loops on the ground than her brother. "It's different roping live cattle from a horse than practicing on a dummy, so I try to rope as much as possible from horseback," Cooper detailed. His sister also ropes successfully from a horse, but just hasn't had as much time doing it, yet.

Insisting that horses are key to many of their most-prized winnings, the cowboy and cowgirl twinkle as they talked about their favorite mounts.

"I bought (seven-year-old) Trigger (a palomino gelding) with my own money and did most of the training. He's just 13 hands, yet he has lots of heart," Cooper critiqued. "I do everything on him, but he's small to handle big cattle."

Cactus is a 12.2 hand, 16-year-old bay gelding who Caxton uses successfully in every event. "He's ornery, and I have to ride him a lot, but there isn't anything he can't do. I've placed in every event at the KJRA rodeos riding him," she confirmed.

Eight weekends in each of the past five summers, the Martins have attended Kansas Junior Rodeo Association-sanctioned competitions throughout the state.

"We started going to those rodeos the first year they had them," Candi reflected. Many year-end titles, including high point saddles, have been collected at those events.

"They're young, but these kids really take much of their own responsibility," Candi, a middle-school teacher, noted. "We help them, but a lot of the time, they'd prefer to take care of their own horses and equipment."

Cooper recognized, "Mom and Dad are great help to us, though. They can watch and offer a lot of good advice on what we need to do differently."

Unlike some successful youth rodeo families, their horses are not trained by professionals and purchased at high prices. "We can't afford that kind. We've bought inexpensive horses and done most of the training ourselves," Chris acknowledged.

Competing successfully in every event, Cooper is a former champion in sheep riding, but roping has always been his favorite. "He started carrying a rope around and roping everything in sight when he was very young," Candi informed. "We gave him the opportunity to go out for

other athletics, but all he's ever wanted to do is rope."

Likewise, Chris related, "I thought he might like to show lambs, but when we went to look at some club prospects, he said that they weren't big enough to ride, so he didn't think he wanted any."

Attending a steer show during his parents' attempt to spark an interest in that area, Cooper contended,

"The cattle are all black and none of 'em are lame or have bad eyes, so we won't need to doctor any. I'm really not interested in showing them. Chris said, "I was on the college judging team and liked cattle shows, but I can't get him interested."

Both parents had successful 4-H careers and thought they'd like to have their children as members, too. "We really like the lead-

ership and diverse opportunities offered in 4-H, but a family can't do everything, and they just like to rodeo," Chris admitted.

As far as where the rodeo ability came from, both Chris and Candi rode ranch horses growing up and were in 4-H horse events, but neither competed in rodeos. "Our kids have just become dedicated to the sport by participating from such an early age, I guess," Chris qualified. "They're way better in the arena than we are."

While others at such young age do contest in breakaway roping and ribbon roping as well as team roping on a limited basis, Cooper has been most interested in tie-down calf roping. "He's not too big, but that's the event he likes to do best," Chris evaluated. However, titles have been won in each of the other roping events as well.

Practice cattle are always in the pens at the Diamond C Ranch headquar-

ters nestled a quarter of a mile out in a Flint Hills pasture valley. Their arena allows daily sessions when weather permits, and the family sometimes hauls calves to indoor pens in the winter. A dummy works for some practice tying, but goats and calves are mostly used.

Cooper is especially proud of his main calf roping horse, a gray mare called Cisco, but it's not been an easy road getting the mount to where she is today. "We had Monty Dyer work on her in the roping box, and even when Cooper got her home, he had to have lots of patience," Candi verified.

Noting that she participated in team sports (basketball and tennis) during high school, Candi affirmed, "I think the individual competition of rodeo has been especially good for our children. Their success depends upon how they do

Continued on page 13



Six out of seven horses on the Martins' Diamond C Ranch at Alma are used by children Cooper and Caxton in junior rodeo competition. The gray mare called Cisco has been ridden in professional style by Cooper to win a number of major tie-down roping contests.

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Continued from page 14

personally with their own horses."

However, she pointed out, "This year Cooper has been team roping with Brant Mahaney, and that has been good, too. They've had lots of fun and great learning experiences together."

Of their many winnings, seemingly each youth has one, besides Las Vegas, that stands out in their conversation. "I was so excited when I won the 12 and under breakaway roping during the Cavalcade Rodeo at Pawhuska, Okla.," Caxton exclaimed.

"I was really happy to be second in the average of the

12 and under tie-down roping for the second year in a row at the Rising Stars Calf Roping on Thanksgiving weekend in Oklahoma," emphasized Cooper.

But, there is more than rodeo in their lives. Cooper took Trigger up the creek to check seven traps he's running this winter. A cell phone call to Dad revealed another success, "a big coon. Can you come help me?"

Likely, competition for other rodeo contestants is going to get tougher in years ahead, as both children talk enthusiastically about who will and won't be their opposition, and most importantly which horses will be needed and trained for that accomplishment.

Cooper confirmed, "My main goal is to tie-down calf rope at the National Finals Rodeo in a few years."



On her trophy saddle at the left, Caxton Martin, 7, Alma, was reserve champion overall and the top girl roper at the World's Championship Dummy Roping during the National Finals Rodeo in Las Vegas. The young cowboy from Oklahoma on his trophy saddle at the right made 14 horn catches in a row, beating Martin who caught 13 before she missed. Her brother, Cooper, 11, was in the top five of the boy's 9-11 age group. National Finals contestants, including world champions, served as judges.

(© T-D Rodeo Photos)



Caxton Martin rounds a barrel on her 16-year-old bay gelding, Cactus, showing the form that has earned the pair numerous junior rodeo awards and trophy saddles in every event from barrel racing to goat tying to breakaway roping.

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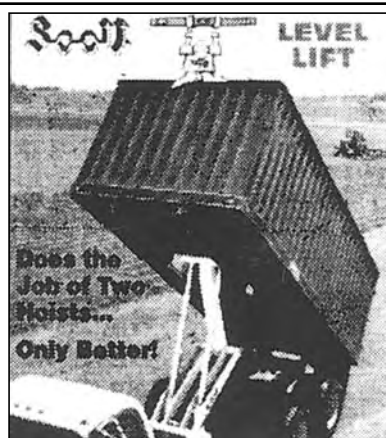


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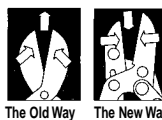
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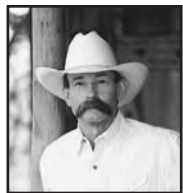


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In The Company Of Kings Rodeo

It was one of those weeks when I felt like Forrest Gump. In the movie, he frequently found himself in the company of presidents, Hall of Famers and kings. In my week at the National Finals Rodeo in Las Vegas, I found myself shaking hands with rodeo royalty: Roy Cooper, Ty Murray, Lewis Feild, Larry Mahan and Trevor Brazile. Each an All Around World Champion with enough buckles between them to sink Bob Tallman to the bottom of the pool!

There is something about the kind of people who achieve greatness. They have a presence. When they walk into a room or ride into the arena, it's like putting a big frog in the aquarium; the water level changes for everybody.

There is mental toughness in these champions that allows them to play through pain, to push the envelope, to deal with adversity; be it a bad draw, a strained knee or a muddy track. They have the practiced ability to concentrate on the job they're doin' even when the canvas is flappin', the reins are tangled and the wheel's comin' off the wagon!

Ty Murray, seven-time All Around World Champion, was asked about Trevor Brazile's 6th All Around World Championship win after the 2008 National Finals Rodeo. Ty said he expected Trevor would surpass his seven wins and set a new record. He credited Trevor's youth, but he emphasized his determination, work ethic and drive.

Ty made an observation that I have noticed in many fields of endeavor; there is only one guy who can beat the most naturally gifted competitor ... that is the guy who works the hardest. However, if you are naturally talented AND work the hardest, you are unbeatable. That describes all these World Champions.

When Ty won his seventh All Around World Championship in 1998, he broke Larry Mahan's record of six. Larry had held it for 25 years after besting Jim Shoulders's record of five. All three of these champions worked the rough stock events; saddle broncs, bareback and bulls. At the time Ty broke Larry's record, Larry had graciously congratulated Ty and crowned him King of the Cowboys. Which meant, of course, that Larry acknowledged he, himself, was the Queen.

Now with Trevor Brazile barking at Ty's heels, Ty asked Larry, "What happens if Trevor beats my seven championships?" Would Ty, himself, then become Queen? And Larry be moved down the ladder to become the Prince of the Cowboys? Larry gave it a flicker of thought and said, "Nah, he's just a roper."

Insects probably affected more by insecticides than by Bt crops

Non-target insects are probably affected more by conventional insecticides than by crops that contain genes from the soil bacterium *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt), according to the findings of a study by Agricultural Research Service (ARS) scientists and cooperators. The findings were published recently in Public Library of Science ONE.

Bt crops such as maize and cotton are genetically engineered to produce insect-specific toxins. They target specific insect pests, but the researchers wanted to determine how these crops influence non-target insects in the environment.

To find out, scientists from ARS collaborated with researchers at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, Iowa State University and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Steven Naranjo, a research leader at the ARS Arid Land Agricultural Research Center in Maricopa, Ariz., and Jonathan Lundgren, an entomologist at the ARS North Central Agricultural Research Laboratory in Brookings, S.D., contributed to the work.

The scientists compared the abundance of groups of non-target insects. They first compared the abundance of these insects in Bt crops and non-Bt crops without any insecticides. They also compared the insect populations in both types of crops treated with insecticides. And they compared the non-target insect populations in Bt crops without insecticides versus the populations in non-Bt

crops treated with insecticides.

They formed these groups of non-target insects with data drawn from a modified version of a public database created by Santa Clara University biologist Michelle Marvier and colleagues. The toxins examined included Cry1Ab and Cry3Bb in maize, Cry3A in potato and Cry1Ac and Cry1Ab in cotton.

The researchers observed considerable variability in the effects of Bt cotton and maize crops on non-target insects. However, the data within the groups were fairly consistent. The most influential factor was the insecticide applied. Collectively, insecticides such as pyrethroids, organophosphates, carbamates and neonicotinoids had larger negative impacts on non-target insects than did the Bt crops.

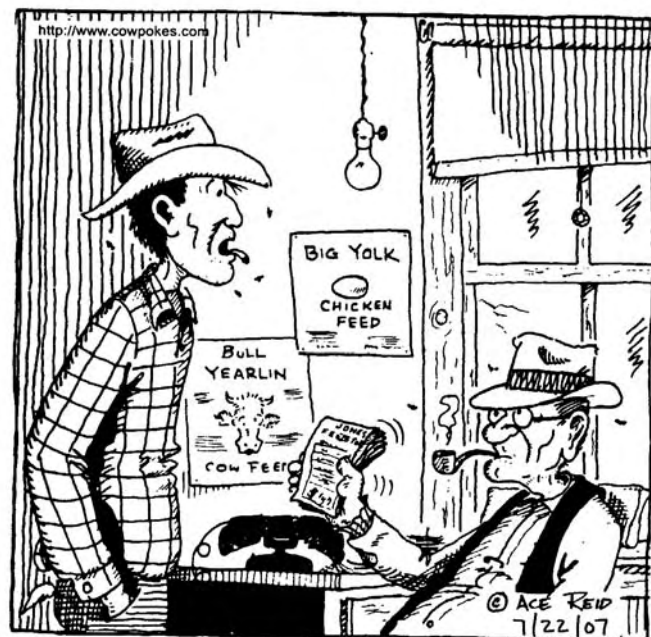
The researchers con-

cluded that when it comes to killing non-target insects, no treatment at all has the least impact. Bt

crops have considerably less impact on non-target insects than do conventional insecticides.

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