

Oklahoma Country

Spring 2013

THE MAGAZINE OF
THE OKLAHOMA FARM BUREAU

INSIDE:

A Pastured-Poultry Renaissance

OFB Leadership Team

Lifetime Legacy Award

Telling Our Story Online



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Social media is quickly becoming the way to communicate, and we hope you will join us as we share the farm story with the world.

Hidden number worth \$50!

One member family's Oklahoma Farm Bureau membership number is hidden somewhere in this issue of OKLAHOMA COUNTRY, and could earn that member family \$50.

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hidden membership number and contact Karolyn Bolay before the last day of the month Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. at 405-523-2320.

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on the face of your individual OFB membership card for you to claim the cash prize. The membership number that appears on your magazine's mailing label is not the hidden number, but also must match the hidden number for you to claim the cash prize.

Cover Image
Marty and Lane Kester stand in a pasture near Stilwell where their pasture-raised laying hens roam.

(Photograph by Dustin Mielke)



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Presidentially Speaking



BY MIKE SPRADLING
*President
Oklahoma Farm Bureau
& Affiliated Companies*

You're Not Your Grandfathers' Farmer

Although the producers of yesterday and their mission remain the same, I think we all would agree that today's farmers and ranchers definitely take a different approach on how we achieve the same goals of our predecessors. In order to keep up with population growth, more food will have to be produced in the next 50 years than was produced in the past 10,000 years combined. Yes you read it right, 10,000 years. We as a nation, as well as a large portion of the world's population, owe much to the farmers and ranchers of earlier years. It wasn't that many years ago when the goal of the American farmer and rancher was to produce enough food for him and his family. Two hundred years ago 90 percent of the population farmed; today we represent less than two percent of the U. S. population.

In 1940 people making their livelihood from farming fed 19 people. In 1960 each farmer fed 26 individuals. Today's farmer produces on the average enough food to feed 155 people each and every day. In today's agriculture environment we wouldn't think anything of the challenge to produce enough food to feed our family. Barring environmental disasters, we easily meet the nutritional needs of this country as well as the needs of many other countries of the world. But that's today. What about tomorrow? What is the future role and what will be the challenges of tomorrow's American agriculture? What will tomorrow's farmer be like compared to his grandfathers' generation?

Today's farmer is much more involved and responsible for producing, managing and marketing his commodity or livestock. Product development, genetics and technology have given him the edge over the generation before him. What will be in the arsenal of production practices to help us meet the goals and challenges of feeding the population of 2050 and at the same time producing virtually on the same number of acres?

First of all, today's farmer has more formal education. One third of today's farmers have some college credits, and of those, over 30 percent have college degrees. Today and tomorrow's farmer must be computer literate, be

part scientists and part chemist, and have knowledge of agriculture, animal husbandry, horticulture and genetics. He has to have an understanding of business, finance, economics and marketing. In today's political environment, he can't afford to stand on the sidelines. Regulation and legislation, as it relates to agriculture, may prove to be a bigger challenge to production than disastrous weather patterns. This is not to say that yesterday's farmers didn't have knowledge in these disciplines, but tomorrow's farmer, in order to meet the challenges on our behalf, must have more than knowledge of these sciences; he must have a working understanding of each. Technology plays a bigger role in our lives each and every day, and the same can be said in the life of a farmer.

Technology has provided things like precision guidance systems in our tractors, combines and sprayers in order to reduce overlap, while assuring every inch of available soil is placed into production. Today's planters precisely plant the correct seed count to maximize production on each acre and do it in such a way as to minimally disturb the soil. Today's sprayers are equipped with smart spray heads that can detect the difference between plants and weeds. Fertilizer can be applied in varying amounts on different parts of a field by use of precision onboard computers. Irrigation systems today electronically calculate the moisture needs of a field and deliver the necessary amounts of water, while at the same time applying the needed nutrients.

These are just a few of the things available to us as tools of production, and we will take advantage of these assets to meet the goals of feeding and clothing the world. But it seems in today's society meeting goals of production isn't the only obligation of the farmer to the consumer. Just providing food to the consumer in an acceptable quantity and quality isn't enough. Today's consumers want to know everything about the food they are consuming, from where it is grown to what type of seeds are used to grow it and why we fertilize it. They want to know the purposes and risks of the chemicals and insecticides we use and whether

GMOs and cloning are safe and necessary. Each and every day it seems more important that we answer these questions directly to individuals who consume our products.

Not only does today's agricultural technology allow us to meet the challenges and goals of production, but advances in communication technology allow us direct contact with all of the people of the world at any point in time. Through sources such as e-mail, Facebook, Twitter and blogs, we now have a means of telling our story and answering questions as only we, the producers, can. Just as it is necessary to adapt to new technology in the field of agriculture to meet the goals of production, it is just as important to master and use the communication technology of today to satisfy the needs of the consumer.

How do we as farmers and ranchers, two percent of the nation's population, meet the challenge of communicating with a world of information speakers and still perform duties necessary to feed and clothe them? The same way they now communicate with each other – social media. Social media refers to interactions among people in which they create, share and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. Many of you are well versed in this form of communication and have used it every day for some time now. Others are quite aware of its use but have not seen the need to invest the time or money to master the knowledge and skills necessary. I think the mindset toward social media of many today is the same as the feelings toward the computer naysayers of yesterday. What does it do and how will it be of any benefit to me?

I don't think we need to wait any longer to see the benefits social media brings to users and non users alike. It is quite evident that today's young farmers and ranchers know the value it affords in communicating, educating, teaching, marketing and informing. Forty-six percent of the American population, young and old alike, carry smart phones. That means those who know and use some form of social media have access to nearly half of America, not to mention one third world wide, at any moment in time.

Social media is here to stay. Maybe your grandfather never used it as an a production tool back in his day, but don't be surprised to see your grandfather or grandmother packing a smart phone in today's environment. Even if they don't use it in day to day operations, you can be sure they are using it to keep in touch with the grandchildren. What a simple tool allowing you to have the world at the tip of your fingers. Make sure to read more about OFB's social media presence on page 22.

Mike Spradling



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BY MONICA WILKE
Executive Director
Oklahoma Farm Bureau and Affiliated Companies

Farm Bureau ... for life

Like so many Farm Bureau members, I grew up in rural Oklahoma where kids eagerly await their ninth birthdays in anticipation of raising their first 4-H livestock project. For me, it was a crossbred pig, but regardless of the type of animal, the one thing all exhibitors have in common is the long list of life lessons these projects teach us.

Caring for an animal regardless of the weather, sacrificing other activities to be in the show ring and preparing diligently but not always coming home with a blue ribbon are all experiences that taught me so much about the value of hard work, goal-setting, patience and humility. Like so many others, I had to lose before I won, but the second places or the times I didn't even qualify were invaluable in my quest to improve.

As one show season ends with the conclusion of local shows and the Oklahoma Youth Expo in March and another begins with the purchase of new animals this spring and summer, I am reminded of the many hardworking students who participate in our state's 4-H and FFA programs, and I am proud to say these youth are the future of Oklahoma agriculture. You see, these programs are about much more than showing; they help instill a passion for the agricultural industry and encourage self-confidence and leadership in our young people, all of which are needed to ensure one of our state's leading industries remains viable in producing a safe, affordable and abundant supply of food and fiber.

These programs are also investments in human capital. The young men and women who participate in 4-H and FFA are tomorrow's

farmers, ranchers, business owners, educators, politicians and leaders. As an executive who is always looking for talented individuals to join our team, I eagerly look for former 4-H and FFA members because of the broad skill sets they possess.

As more and more young adults leave rural Oklahoma, there becomes a greater disconnect with the rural way of life. One of Farm Bureau's objectives is educating youth about the agricultural industry and recruiting them to stay in rural Oklahoma. In addition to enhancing these students' opportunities in 4-H and FFA, OFB strives to provide a valuable network and beneficial resources for them as they progress through life in agriculture.

As young students, they see our safety trailers at their schools and learn from the Ag in the Classroom curriculum we support. As they grow older, students are able to participate in several Farm Bureau-sponsored events. Whether it is a speech competition, an agriculture video challenge, a livestock judging contest or our popular Oklahoma Youth Leading Agriculture conference, youth from across the state gain valuable exposure to our organization and its role in Oklahoma agriculture, while developing marketable skills they will no doubt use their entire life.

As important as it is to develop those skills, it is equally important to surround yourself with a group of people who have the same interests and passions, so those skills can be exercised and strengthened. As students graduate from high school, we encourage them

to stay connected through our Collegiate Farm Bureau program and the Young Farmers and Ranchers Committee. YF&R is designed to provide our members, ages 18 to 35, opportunities to develop leadership skills, get involved in their communities, cultivate friendships with people from across the state and country and become strong voices for the agricultural industry.

By the time members progress through these programs, they are well-equipped advocates for agriculture. They participate in our grassroots policy development process, they are eager to visit with legislators about issues in their communities and they are proud to stand up for protecting the rural way of life. Most importantly, these seasoned members become role models for younger members, so the legacy of Oklahoma agriculture can continue.

Oklahoma Farm Bureau is proud to offer opportunities for a lifetime of engagement in agriculture. As the state's largest agricultural organization, we take pride in supporting students who are passionate about the agricultural industry and the heritage of rural Oklahoma. I encourage you – our OFB members – to share your story with young people. Inspire them to not only become our state's next generation of farmers and ranchers, but also the next generation of leaders.

Monica A. Wilke

Oklahoma Country

Spring 2013
Volume 66 No. 2
OKLAHOMA COUNTRY
(ISSN 1544-6476)

Published four times per year in April, July, October and January by Oklahoma Farm Bureau, 2501 N. Stiles, Oklahoma City, OK 73105-3126, Telephone (405) 523-2300. Periodicals postage paid at Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and Additional Mailing Offices.

Postmaster: Send address corrections to: OKLAHOMA COUNTRY, P.O.B. 53332, Oklahoma City, OK 73152-3332.

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BY GEORGE DRIEVER

*Extension Educator, Horticulture / 4-H Youth Development
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Planning a Vegetable Garden

The warming weather has many people interested in getting out of the house and getting some fresh air. A good way to get some healthy, outdoor exercise and improve your diet with healthful food is to develop a small garden. It takes few tools to make a garden. The investment in seed and a few other needs should be more than compensated by the “homegrown” flavor of your vegetables. The best part is that you have control of the chemicals that are applied to your garden so you know what you are eating, and you get the vegetables at the peak of their nutritional level.

A garden doesn't have to be large to provide you with the vegetables that you enjoy. If you have never gardened before, I would advise you start small. Expand the garden as you get time and gain expertise. Plant the vegetables you like

so that you will have a greater motivation to take care of the plants.

Choosing a proper site is an important aspect of successful gardening. Ideally, choose an area that has full or near full sunlight. Some vegetables can tolerate partial shade and can be grown under young trees or mature trees with high lacy canopies. Sadly, few vegetables will grow in dense shade. Some vegetables that will grow under partial shade conditions include beans, beets, broccoli, chard, leaf lettuce, peas, potatoes and spinach.

The best soil type is a loamy soil that is well-drained. While I realize that many Oklahoma soils have a high level of clay, these soils can be remediated with organic matter to help loosen the soil. Building raised beds is another option. By adding a good top soil in an elevated mound, you can garden on top of the clay. See OSU Fact Sheet HLA-6033 for information on setting up raised beds. Another option is to have a patio container garden. One large pot can easily grow one large plant (tomato) or several small plants (lettuce, onions, carrots). Keep in mind that these will have to be watered daily unless it rains.

Gardens should be oriented on a north-south axis if possible to take advantage of the maximum amount of sun. New beds should be prepared in the fall, but if starting one this spring, be sure to remove as much of the grass roots as possible. To help control bermuda grass in a garden, herbicides such as Over the Top can be used. This herbicide will only control grassy weeds. Take note that it will also kill corn. Remove other weeds when they are small.

If the garden is new or you have not sampled the soil for nutrient levels in the last three or four years, then a soil test should be taken. Only apply fertilizers as needed and in the recommended manner. You can use nutrients from an organic source by fertilizing with compost or natural nutrient supplements.

When choosing plants for your garden, plant

only varieties that are recommended for the area. If unsure, visit with a local nursery or contact your county extension educator and ask for OSU Fact Sheet HLA-6032, Vegetable Varieties for the Home Garden in Oklahoma.

Many cool season crops such as beets, carrots, chard, lettuce, onions, oriental greens, peas and potatoes can be planted from mid-February through mid-March. With minimal protection, many of the greens can be grown all winter long in Oklahoma, especially in the mid to southern counties. Sweet corn can be planted by the last week of March. Many of the warm season vegetables such as tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, squash and beans can be planted by the second week of April. Cantaloupes, watermelon, and Southern peas (purple-hull, black-eye) need warm soils and should not be planted until the first of May. For more information on vegetable planting details or garden planning, get the OSU Fact Sheet HLA-6004.

Many plants like to be planted with other plants, this is called companion planting. Many herbs will repel pests from other vegetables. Some plants shouldn't be planted together. For a general fact sheet on companion planting and other cultural control practices, get HLA-6431. Don't hesitate to grow some flowers that attract beneficial insects, this will help you to control some of the harmful insects.

For a free, electronic copy of these fact sheets, go to: <http://osufacts.okstate.edu> and key in the fact sheet number in the “search” box located on the upper left side of the page. Don't hesitate to look at the many other topics that are available.

Enjoy your gardening experience!

Oklahoma State University, U. S. Department of Agriculture, state and Local Government's cooperating. The Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service offers its programs to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, disability, or status as a veteran and is an equal opportunity employer.




Strawberries can be grown throughout Oklahoma and are the number one fruit crop for home gardens.




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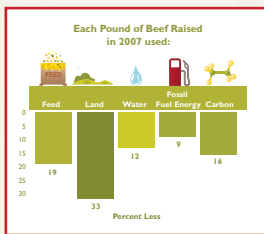
Oklahoma Beef Checkoff UPDATE

Oklahoma Beef Checkoff Dollars Driving US Beef Promotions in the Middle East

USMEF utilized Oklahoma Beef Council funding to conduct a series of in-store tasting demonstrations and point of sale promotions to improve U.S. beef's share in this important and growing market segment. As a result of this activity, sales of U.S. beef through the participating outlets reached 27 MT. Not only was this successful in building product loyalty among targeted retailers and improving consumer perceptions and demand, but it also generated new interest in U.S. beef in other retail chains. USMEF is now negotiating with additional major retail players in the UAE.



Facts About Beef Website Corrects Meatless Monday Myths



The checkoff has been updating and adding content to FactsAboutBeef.com, a website aimed at being an online hub of issues response. New myths include one addressing overuse of antibiotics in cattle, the myth of Meatless

Mondays being better for health and the

environment and a response to the common myth that grass-fed beef is better for the environment than grain-fed beef. You can also sign up on the site to receive alerts when new content is added, so please visit www.FactsAboutBeef.com.

OKC Home and Garden Show-Turning Up the Heat

The Oklahoma Beef Council and the Oklahoma Cattlewomen turned up the heat of beef promotion and education at the 2013 Oklahoma City Home and Garden Show, January 18-20, with more than 30,000 consumers in attendance. The Oklahoma Beef Council with the valuable volunteer assistance of OCW and the Oklahoma Collegiate

Cattlewomen, staffed a booth at the show where staff and volunteers distributed more than 4700 beef samples of Mongolian Sloppy Joes as well as beef recipes and information.

On the cooking stage, OCW hosted the winners of the 2013 Oklahoma Beef Cookoff recipe competition and sampled the different dishes to an enthusiastic crowd. The grand prize winner was Debra Clifton with her Papa's Lasagna.

2013 Beef Industry Sustainability Summit

In 2011, the checkoff-funded Sustainability Research program was launched when the checkoff embarked on the first and largest research project of its kind. The program is a proactive and innovative scientific approach to creating a sustainable beef product for a growing world population while gaining consumer confidence in beef.

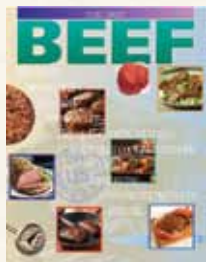
Specific objectives include:

- Maintain consumer confidence in beef as a sustainable food
- Benchmark current and past beef sustainability
- Identify sustainability improvement opportunities and create a better beef community over time
- Serve as an industry resource for current, science-based, beef sustainability information

In January, OBC staff and volunteer leadership attended the 2013 Beef Industry Sustainability Summit in Denver. The purpose of the program was to unite interests of, and give a voice to, all stakeholders along the beef value chain, as well as their industry peers. Initial findings from the checkoff's sustainability beef research project were released at the summit, and sector breakout sessions helped identify immediate improvement opportunities. There is still more work to be done before we can release the findings, but ranchers and farmers can be proud of the steps taken through their beef checkoff to ensure the sustainability of our beef community-economically, socially, and environmentally. Bottom line, it's about being ahead of the curve not behind it.



Farmers and Ranchers- Don't forget to sign up for the Oklahoma Beef Checkoff Update, a monthly e-newsletter providing the latest in checkoff information and news at www.oklabeeff.org/e-newsletter.aspx



Beef for the Classroom

The Oklahoma Beef Council's "Beef for the Classroom" program provides financial support for the use of beef products in high school Family and Consumer Science courses. It reinforces lessons about lean beef selection, storage, preparation, cookery and nutrition.

For the 2012/2013, sixty Oklahoma classrooms are participating in the program reaching more than 6400 students.

Oklahoma Retailer Seeking New Opportunities

To find new creative ways to showcase beef in the meat case and keep it top of mind with budget-conscious consumers, Homeland's meat merchandising staff recently spent time with Steve Leigh, a member of the checkoff-funded, retail team at National Cattlemen's Beef Association. The group worked through alternative fabrication and merchandising methods for the chuck roll, currently an under-valued subprimal with excellent market opportunities.

As a reminder, the Beef Checkoff works to inspire beef product innovation and facilitate success across the beef chain by bringing information, insight, ideas, science, and tools to industry influencers and stakeholders. To learn more, visit www.beefinnovationsgroup.com.

OBC Reaching Dietitians at the Fall Symposium



The Oklahoma Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (Formerly Oklahoma Dietetic Association) 2012 Fall

Symposium brought together 150 nutrition professionals at Mercy Hospital. It was the perfect opportunity to continue to press home the message of the checkoff-funded BOLD (Beef in an Optimal Lean Diet) research study that showed lean beef fits in a heart-healthy diet. The Oklahoma Beef Council provided BOLD bags stuffed with information about the study including a CD with the BOLD study, patient handouts, and recipes during the exhibit time allotted. Feedback was very positive regarding the study and materials provided.

Stockmanship and Stewardship with Curt Pate



This fall, beef producers had the opportunity to fine tune their cattle handling skills with one of the nation's most sought after clinicians, Curt Pate. Hosted by the Oklahoma Beef Council through the beef checkoff program, the Elk City Livestock Auction, and Simmons Ranch; the clinic focused on effective stockmanship with the intent of enhancing profitability by working with the natural instincts of cattle.

Approximately 50 beef producers attended the clinic at the Elk City Livestock Auction. Participants enjoyed interacting with Curt while improving their cattle handling skills. Curt was able to use his personal experience to relate to producers. Everyone had a good time, learned something new and had a few good laughs along the way.

Spurring Purchase Decisions by Demystifying the Meat Case

Think consumers know all they need to know about meat cuts? Think again. Extensive research conducted by the National Pork Board and the Beef Checkoff Program indicates that today's consumers are as confused as ever when it comes to purchasing fresh meat. To drive purchase intent, retailers need to help consumers better understand how to shop for and prepare fresh cuts available in the grocery meat case. This cross-industry effort was established to increase consumer confidence by working to simplify common names for meat and create consistent, easy-to-follow preparation instructions.

The results of consumer research have culminated in changes to the Uniform Retail Meat Identification Standards (URMIS) nomenclature, the development of better on-pack label information and other educational tools - all designed to help retailers stimulate meat case sales. This new initiative was presented in a seminar entitled, "Demystifying the Meat Case for Today's Confused Consumer" at the 2013 Annual Meat Conference in February.

A Pastured-Poultry Renaissance

One Oklahoma farmer finds opportunity in producing eggs in a new, old-fashioned way.

Story and photography by Dustin Mielke

Marty Kester walks across a 10-acre pasture in a picturesque eastern Oklahoma valley lined by tree-covered hills. Across the fence, his stocker cattle graze under the big, blue sky.

In this pasture, however, Kester's other animals are scattered about, searching, eating and clucking.

In a part of Oklahoma that has traditionally been a stronghold for poultry production of various kinds: broilers, egg-laying, hatcheries; Kester embarked on a slightly different variation of producing food with poultry – an organic, pasture-raised egg-laying operation.

"I think that you try to produce the best-quality product possible," Kester said of his agricultural operation.

While the terms "cage-free" "pastured poultry" and "organic" come with emotional connotations, both positive and negative, Kester saw the chance to jump into producing a specialty product as an opportunity to grow his farm and be further involved in agriculture.

"As far as financial gains, it's better than traditional egg production," Kester said. "But at the same time, there's a lot more legwork, and there's a lot more regulations."

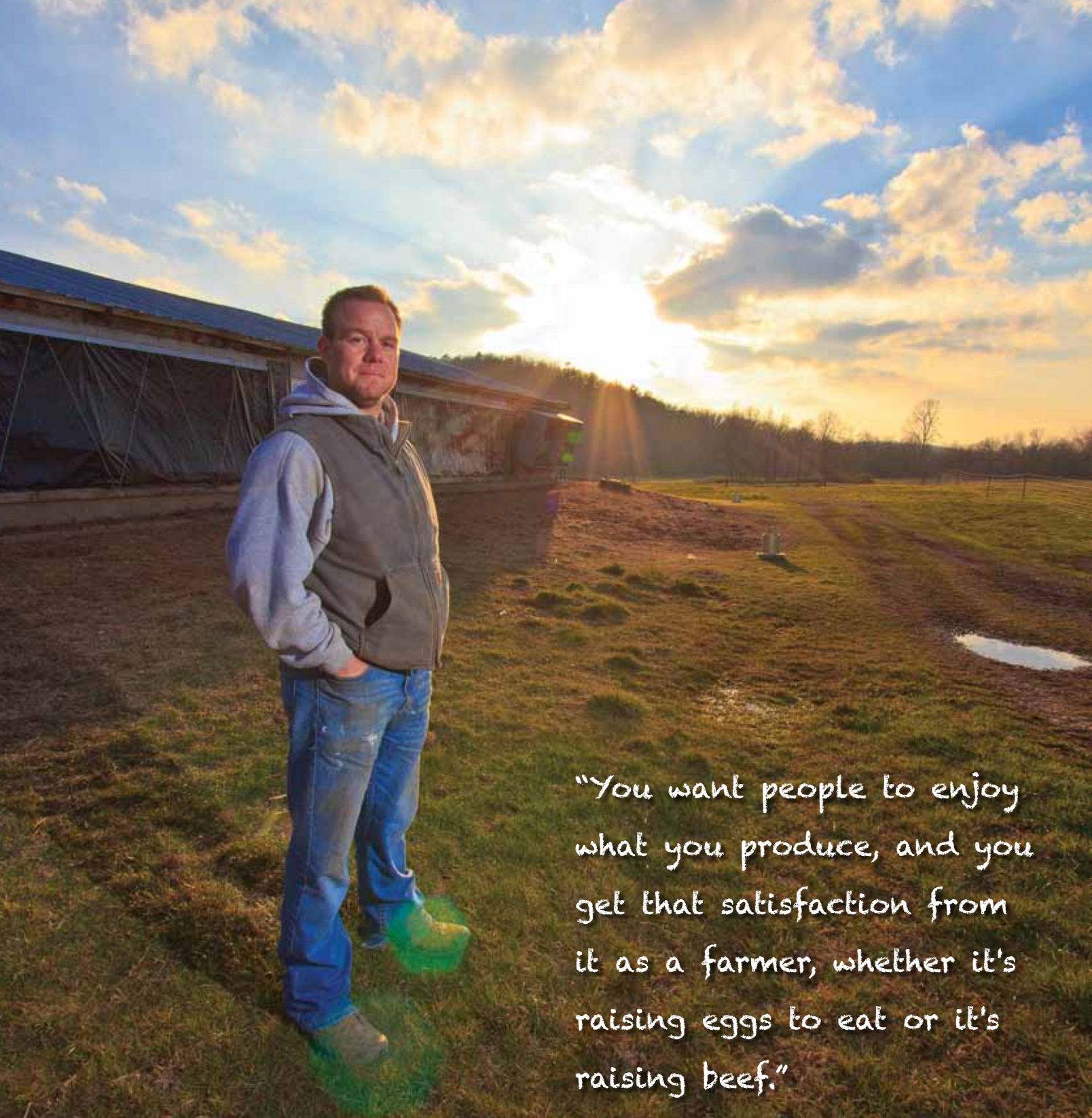
Kester, a third-generation Oklahoma farmer, began his journey toward producing pasture-raised organic eggs when he purchased a farm he always had his eye on. Along with pastures nestled in a beautiful valley near Stilwell, the property had two chicken houses that had been home to an egg farm years ago.

Arkansas Egg Company of Summers, Ark., approached Kester about converting the chicken houses into facilities that would be suitable for pastured, egg-laying chickens. This type of egg production was new not only to Kester, but also to many in eastern Oklahoma.

"It's something new," Kester said of his egg-laying operation. "Maybe some of us younger ones are kind of crazy enough to try something new."

"That was the talk around our community – that I was kind of crazy – but now that people have seen that it will make money and it's not just a joke, it's starting to spark interest."





"You want people to enjoy what you produce, and you get that satisfaction from it as a farmer, whether it's raising eggs to eat or it's raising beef."

Kester retrofitted existing chicken houses, which are federally inspected on a quarterly basis.



Ashley Swaffar, operations manager for Arkansas Egg Company, said approximately one-third of the company's business comes from organic, pasture-raised farms such as Kester's. While all the eggs the company produces are specialty eggs, Swaffar said the company started their organic, pasture-raised production in 2010.

"We see a large demand for it," Swaffar said of the specialty eggs. "We're the only company in the nation that is pasture-raising on a larger scale."

To convert the older egg-production houses into buildings suitable for pasture-raised, organic production, Kester said the buildings were slightly expanded, outside doors were added for the birds to be able to enter and exit the buildings, cooling cells were added for hot days, and pastures were fenced off for the birds.

"Eight to 10 acres is what they'll have, per house, to roam around," Kester said. "We have those divided into four different pastures. Two pastures will go 30 days, and then we'll rotate each pasture every 30 days."

Any day that is above freezing and not extremely hot, the doors of the chicken houses will be open and the birds will be able to roam the pastures.

"Anything above 32 degrees, they'll be let out," Kester said. "As long as it's not snowing or raining, they have the option to go outside."

"When it gets extremely hot, their production will go down if you don't get them back inside and get them cooled off."

Kester admits this sort of production is harkening back to days of old when many farms had smaller chicken coops with birds that roamed the farmyard.

"It was almost what you'd say, obsolete, but now it's being resurrected because it is something that the consumer is wanting," Kester said. "So these older houses, like what we have on our farm, we're going back and retrofitting them and putting them back into production instead of just letting them sit there."

Walking into one of Kester's chicken houses, one is greeted by an expanse of brown, curious birds. Four thousand birds, to be exact. Each of the two buildings has the capacity to house 4,000 chickens, with each animal producing a target of one egg per day.

"Right now we're doing about 95 percent production, which is extremely good," Kester said. "We've hit our goal, so we're extremely happy about that."

Eggs are laid in roosts, with two long rows of roosts in each house, after which they roll onto a conveyor belt. When it's time to gather eggs, Kester turns on the conveyor, and the eggs are moved to one end of the house, where they are taken, by hand, from the belt and put into egg flats. The three daily collections of eggs should optimally yield 8,000 eggs – all placed by hand into egg flats.



Kester's birds are outside in the pastures any day it is above freezing and not extremely hot.



During the daytime, the buildings are opened up and the chickens can come and go as they please.



The chickens roost and lay eggs inside the buildings, which have cooling cells for hot days.

"Everything is by hand," Kester said. "That's what takes the most time. We also have to plastic-wrap the eggs when they get ready to ship, so there's a lot of legwork to this operation."

After the eggs are collected, they are put into a cooler for on-farm storage until they are taken from the farm by Arkansas Egg Company. Every egg Kester produces is sold to the company.

Swaffar said Kester's eggs end up in Whole Foods stores across the nation as well as in regional grocery stores.

The birds on Kester's farm will lay eggs for 18 months, after which they are removed and harvested for meat products. After a year and a half of working with a single group of birds, Kester will have a break of approximately three weeks, then get another batch of chickens for another 18-month stretch.

The amount of work involved isn't for the faint of heart.

"We have to be here at 5:30 every morning for the first feeding," Kester said. "We have to put the birds up at dark, and right now that's 12 to 14 hours a day. That's not traditional."

Kester employs a member of the local community to help around the farm. Whenever the birds are outside, somebody is on the farm, ensuring the birds have feed and water.

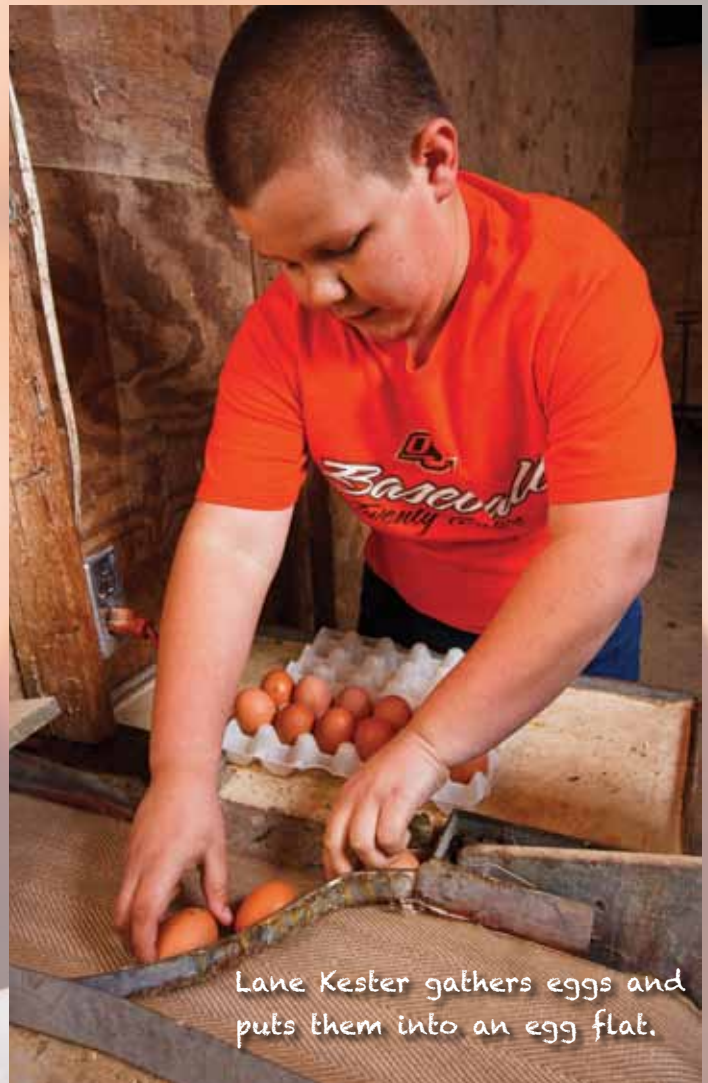
Kester's nine-year-old son, Lane, also helps around the farm, making caring for the chickens a family affair.

"I pick up a few eggs every now and then, and I help my dad put up the chickens and fix the tractor," Lane said of his contributions.

Perhaps the family member most excited about the chickens arriving on the farm was Kester's grandfather, who raised broiler chickens for 30 years.

"My grandpa does miss the chicken business," Kester said. "He's kind of like a kid again sometimes when you call him and ask him for help."

"I think running a farm like this, every day, it has to be a family-type atmosphere."



Lane Kester gathers eggs and puts them into an egg flat.



Each chicken house has four pastures. The chickens are moved from pasture to pasture to foster even grazing.

With two previous generations of Oklahoma farmers behind him, Kester has found an emerging area of agriculture to direct his passion for the industry. "It's something that's in your blood, and you always come back to it," Kester said. Building his agricultural operation has meant more for Kester than just following a mold or an already-blazed path. The journey to running his poultry operation has involved numerous "aha" moments for him and his family, whose backgrounds did not involve egg production.

"It's something that we're learning every day, I guess," Kester said.

With his background in agriculture production, Kester said organic production, while growing, can and needs to coexist with traditional agricultural operations.

"I think that the amount of people we have to feed, it's sometimes impossible to do it totally organic," Kester said. "It's hard to raise that much protein as fast as it's needed, so organic is more of a specialty item."

Throughout his operation, caring for the environment, his animals and the consumer is what Kester takes pride in.

"With the common sense that a farmer has, he doesn't want to pollute anything that he has, because he's passing it down from generation to generation," Kester said. "He doesn't want to pollute anything that his family will inherit."

That common sense carries over to animal care. Kester's barns are computer-monitored, which alert him to problems with the houses by sending a text message to his cell phone. Kester's houses are also federally inspected, providing third-party verification that production methods are being appropriately carried out.

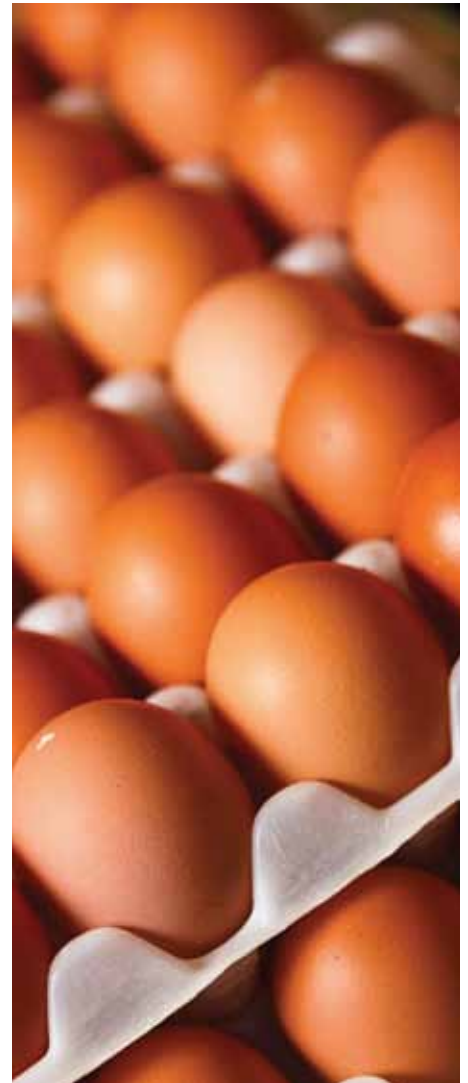
"When you go to a specialty item, I think the scope is on you just a little bit tighter," Kester said. "The federal inspectors come around every quarter and go through our houses and make sure they're up to par."

"From the farm all the way until it is consumed, there are regulations."

And if Kester's enthusiasm for his current operation isn't enough, he's already looking into the possibility of expanding.

Ultimately, the opportunity to produce organic, pasture-raised eggs is just another opportunity for Kester to accomplish what he feels most farmers truly desire: to put an excellent product on the tables of consumers.

"We try to raise the best, whether it's beef or eggs, or whatever we're doing, we're trying to do our best," Kester said. "I think most farmers get that pride from producing a premium product."



Lifetime Legacy

By Sam Knipp

Oklahoma Farm Bureau YF&R Award
honors those who inspire and enrich our lives.



THE LIVES OF CHRISTY SMITH AND GERALD TURNER

took separate yet parallel paths. The two Oklahoma agricultural leaders both served their country in WWII, both lived and raised their families on farms and both received Oklahoma Farm Bureau's Young Farmers and Ranchers Lifetime Legacy Award.

The Lifetime Legacy Award honors an individual who has spent his or her life enriching and inspiring rural Oklahomans' quality of life.

"We look for people who are committed to agriculture as a way of life and teaching the next generation," said YF&R Chairman Mason Bolay. "We want to identify those who have dedicated their lives to agriculture and Farm Bureau, and they would not necessarily have to be county Farm Bureau presidents."

Smith received the award in 2011, the first year it was presented. The Ada resident passed away earlier this year but left a lifetime of memories, including her work as a U.S. Army nurse during WWII.

"I had brothers and brothers-in-laws fighting in the European theater and I wanted to help them," Smith said. "I loved being a nurse."

Over the course of her career, she helped care for the Army's sickest patients, working in environments that ranged from an Army base in California to a makeshift hospital in the Philippine jungle. Smith later worked at Valley View Regional Hospital in Ada for 30 years while working with her late husband, Artie, on their Pontotoc County ranch.

"Artie and I worked together every day out in the field," Smith said. "That was the happiest time of my life."

The couple became involved in Farm Bureau, and Smith served many years on the Pontotoc County Farm Bureau Women's Committee. When asked about her long time Farm Bureau and community involvement, Smith summarized her commitment with three words: faith, hope and love.

"I just like to be helpful to others," Smith said. *(cont'd on page 20)*



Longtime Pontotoc County Farm Bureau member Christy Smith was recognized for her service and dedication to agriculture as the first recipient of the YF&R Lifetime Legacy Award in 2011.

We're in the hunt for answers about quail



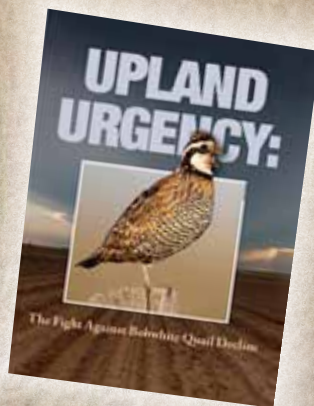
Your Wildlife Department is actively pursuing the reasons behind decades of declining bobwhite quail populations.

WHAT ARE WE DOING ?

- The Wildlife Department is working with Oklahoma State University's Department of Natural Resource Ecology and Management and the Oklahoma Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit to study quail habitat and the effects of weather and hunting. Researchers are using transmitters on birds to collect data about their daily habits. These efforts are scheduled to continue until 2017 on several wildlife management areas.
- *Operation Idiopathic Decline* (OID) unites the expertise of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, Texas A&M University, Rolling Plains Quail Research Ranch, Texas Tech University and Texas A&M-Kingsville to research possible factors such as diseases, toxins, parasites and insects. The Wildlife Department is collecting quail from 10 wildlife management areas in Oklahoma to provide sample birds for disease research. OID will continue into 2014.
- The Wildlife Department is providing technical assistance to landowners who want to improve habitat for quail. To learn more about this assistance, call (405) 521-2730.

HOW CAN YOU HELP ?

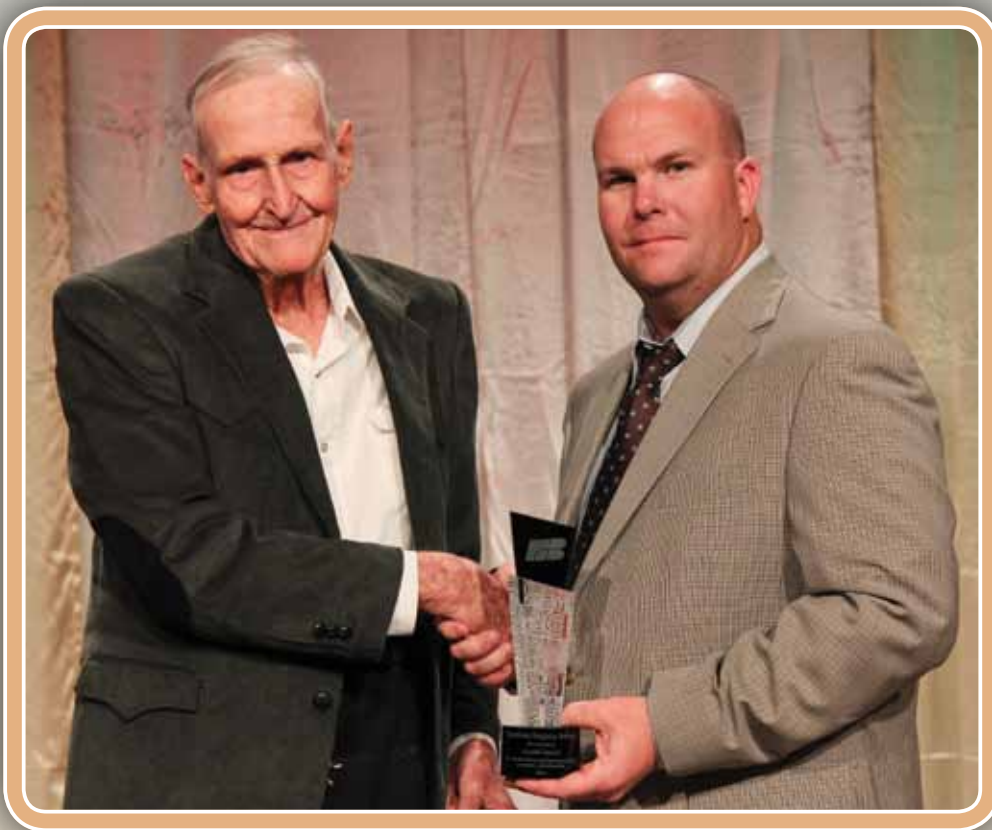
Hunters, through their hunting license dollars, help fund these quail research efforts and conserve the species for future generations.



To learn more, read "Upland Urgency" at wildlifedepartment.com. And look for our updated "Quail Habitat Guide" coming in May 2013.



Gerald Turner (left) accepts the 2012 YF&R Lifetime Legacy Award from YF&R chairman Brent Straub during the OFB Annual Meeting in November 2012. Turner encourages young agriculturalists to work hard and never give up on their dreams.



Turner was honored with the award in 2012. The Pawnee rancher operates a beef cow herd, fretting over first calf heifers during a snow storm, just like he has for most of his nearly nine decades on this earth. He has plenty of help from his wife, three sons and two daughters.

Turner and Ella Mae have been married 59 years. What's their secret?

"The secret to marriage is to take 40 percent and give 60 percent," Turner said.

Turner's legacy is steeped in Oklahoma history. As a young boy growing up on the Oklahoma prairie in the late 1930's, he learned how to rope and ride from Wild West show legends Pawnee Bill and Mexican Joe and famous rodeo cowboy Ben Johnson.

"Pawnee Bill always welcomed me to his ranch, so I hung around there whenever I could," Turner said. "Mexican Joe worked for Pawnee Bill as ranch foreman and ol' Joe was the best roper around. He could rope cattle with his foot! He even showed me how to make a rope. Ben Johnson was the best steer roper I ever saw."

When WWII erupted, Turner enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps and worked as an airplane mechanic, servicing B-17 bombers. While stationed in Belgium, Turner and his cadre tired of eating the army chow. They sneaked into a nearby town and dined on steak.

"Best steak I had eaten in a long time," Turner said.

Even after he discovered it was horse meat, not beef, he didn't complain.

"I guess I was plenty hungry."

During that time, he also ate his share of carrots and beets.

"Beets are no substitute for beef," Turner said. "Maybe that should be on a bumper sticker! If I was a vegetarian, man, I'd really suffer. I like fruits and vegetables, but without meat, I'm still hungry."

Turner's roots are planted deep in this land once known as Indian Territory.

"My grandfather moved to Oklahoma to teach Pawnee Indians how to farm," Turner said.

Wagon tracks are still visible in Turner's hay meadow north of his house. Turner estimates the trail dates to the 1860's, perhaps once part of the Chisholm Trail. This particular trail goes to White Eagle in neighboring Kay County. His great grandmother was post mistress in White Eagle.

"When I was a young man, I learned from some of the best cowboys in the country, and I hope I have passed along some of that knowledge along the way," Turner said.

The weathered Turner isn't necessarily talking about roping and riding skills.

"I tell these young guys to never give up, no matter how hard things get. Hard work will make you a success," Turner said.

Bolay, who farms in neighboring Noble County, said Turner and Smith are the epitome of what the Lifetime Legacy Award stands for.

"These two individuals have lived their lives as an inspiration to others," Bolay said. "Our world is better off because of them."

Bolay encourages Farm Bureau members to nominate someone who has enriched their lives. The Young Farmers and Ranchers committee is currently seeking potential candidates for the 2013 award.



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TELLING OUR STORY ONLINE

SOCIAL MEDIA is quickly becoming the preferred way to communicate and keep in touch with friends, family and even organizations and businesses. With the agricultural industry utilizing social media tools more and more to tell the story of agriculture, it is critical for farmers and ranchers to join the conversation.

Many people think the use of social media is primarily for younger generations, but it is being used by a variety of people in all age ranges. Cody Cramer, a graduate student in the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources at Oklahoma State University, said the social media world can be utilized for a variety of different interests, especially news.

"When I think about hearing news, I picture a coffee shop, every morning, reading the newspaper but now I do that all from my phone with social media while I'm eating breakfast at home," Cramer said.

With these communications tools constantly changing, CASNR is offering a new media class to communications students. This class provides students the opportunity to learn about new media and how businesses and organizations can use these tools to promote their products and services.

"The benefit of social media for organizations is the ability to spread information so quickly," Cramer said. "With the limitations of social media posts, you have to make sure that your information is concise and can be read quickly."

However, social media does more than just help businesses. Agriculturalists of all kinds can use these sites to promote agriculture. Many people like to think of social media as a dinner table. There are all kinds of people at the table and these people share stories and have conversations about a multitude of topics. To have an impact, farmers and ranchers need to be sitting at this table sharing the story of agriculture.

"It is extremely beneficial for farmers and ranchers to use social media to share their story, because if they don't, then no one will hear it," said Kelsey Conley, agricultural communications senior at OSU.

Jimmy Wayne Kinder, a Walters, Okla. farmer, said he uses social media to keep up with family and friends, but also to discuss farming and agriculture issues.

"I post some comments to my Facebook page about agriculture issues like the horse processing legislation issue," Kinder said.

Kinder also uses his social media sites to share with his friends and followers what is happening on the farm.

"Twitter is great for a quick comment or idea that has a short life span," Kinder said. "For example, I posted not too long ago that we were spraying for aphids in our wheat, and I even post pictures occasionally."

Social media tools can also be used to keep up with different agriculture events and meetings.

"A few of the people I follow on Twitter will tweet during a meeting or an event," Kinder said. "This gives extra insight on the speaker's subjects and is also helpful if I can't attend."

When asked what people who are new to the social media world should do, Conley suggests picking one social media platform at first and seeing how it goes.

"First thing, don't be afraid to get involved and just create that first account," Conley said. "Whether it is Facebook or Twitter, pick one and stick with that one until you are comfortable."

AS MORE and more people involved in the agricultural industry begin to use social media sites, Cramer said he hopes to see more farmers and ranchers on these sites educating those that are not familiar with agriculture.

"Already through organizations like the AgChat Foundation, we have different groups, organic and non-organic, talking together," Cramer said. "However, we could do even more at a state-wide or nation-wide level."

Oklahoma Farm Bureau uses a variety of social media tools, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest, along with our website, to keep in touch with members and to stay up to date on agricultural and legislative issues.

Oklahoma Farm Bureau hopes to make an impact through social media by telling the story of our members. By telling the social media world what our members are doing on their farms and ranches, we can encourage people to have a greater appreciation for our farmers and ranchers and all they do.

By Karolyn Bolay

OFB Adds Voice To Social Media

Oklahoma Farm Bureau is actively building audiences on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest, as well as continuing to utilize our presence on our website. Below you will find some tips and tricks for all of our social media accounts to make it easier for you to find us and join our conversation in the social media world regarding agriculture.



Facebook

www.facebook.com/okfarmbureau or search Oklahoma Farm Bureau on your Facebook account.

Facebook Tips: Once you follow the OFB Facebook page, you will see all of our posts in your Newsfeed, which is the main page for you to see information and posts from your friends and pages. Facebook is a great tool to connect with other OFB members and even staff through likes, comments and questions. It is also a great source for events that are happening with OFB and in county Farm Bureaus across the state. Many of our followers on Facebook like to utilize our page to see pictures of events with a mixture of news and other information that is important to our members.



Twitter

www.twitter.com/okfarmbureau or @okfarmbureau if you are already on Twitter.

Twitter Tips: Twitter is all about global communication. It is a platform for you to communicate with other farmers, ranchers and agriculturalists in different parts of the country and even the world. Many Twitter users utilized their Twitter accounts to keep up with news and important information. Twitter is a great place to share short and concise bits of information because each post is limited to 140 characters. Also, Twitter organizes people's tweets through the use of a hashtag, which is simply the pound sign (#). Some important hashtags for the agricultural twitter world are: #ag, #agnews, #agchat, #farm and any other commodities, such as, #wheat, #beef, etc.

Twitter Talk: When looking through tweets, you might run

across some jargon that is specifically for use on Twitter. Here are some of the abbreviations and words you might run into: RT means a retweet, MT means a modified tweet, DM means a direct message, FF means follow Friday (also seen as #FF), TL means timeline, OH means overheard.

Some other people to follow besides Farm Bureau to get started on Twitter are: Oklahoma Water Resources Board, @OKWaterBoard; U.S. Farmers and Ranchers Alliance, @USFRA; Brownfield Ag News, @brownfield; Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, @OklahomaAg.



Instagram

www.instagram.com/okfarmbureau or search okfarmbureau on the Instagram app.

Instagram Tips: Instagram is an app, for those with smart phones, that is used to share pictures. It is like Twitter in that it uses hashtags to organize and categorize the pictures you share. It also provides a variety of filters to use on your photos, which just makes the photo sharing a little more fun! We use our account to share photos from different events, such as AFBF Convention in Nashville, or photos from activities happening with our members at their farm or ranch. Instagram can now be viewed online, but you can only view profiles and not upload any pictures at this time.



Pinterest

www.pinterest.com/okfarmbureau or search Oklahoma Farm Bureau on Pinterest website.

Pinterest Tips: Pinterest is a website that is basically a virtual pinboard for users to "pin" a variety of websites, pictures or tips that they find useful or interesting. Many users pin recipes, household tips, clothing ideas or even interior design and home decorating ideas. You can use Pinterest to browse different boards by other users to discover new things and to be inspired. OFB mainly uses Pinterest to help spread the word about agriculture through different infographics about the industry or to share photos from the agricultural industry.

2013 OFB Leadership Conference

State and federal legislative leaders addressed Oklahoma Farm Bureau leaders Feb. 18-19, during the annual OFB Leadership Conference at the Skirvin Hilton Hotel in Oklahoma City.

"This is a great opportunity for our county leaders to meet with their legislators and discuss issues important to rural Oklahoma," said OFB President Mike Spradling.

Oklahoma FFA President Brandon Baumgarten welcomed members to the conference. The Oilton native challenged members to keep fighting for agriculture.

Lawton businessman Bill Burgess addressed

the group with a presentation on leadership in today's society. Burgess is vice chairman of the Oklahoma Business Roundtable, and his family owns a successful law firm and the Lawton Constitution newspaper. Burgess is a member of the Oklahoma Hall of Fame and is chairman of the board of Vortex, the senior partner of Burgess & Hightower Law Firm, Civilian Aid to the Secretary of the Army and chairman emeritus of Tchrizon, which he has developed into the largest Oklahoma-owned software engineering company. Burgess has served as chairman of the Citizen's Commission on the future of Oklahoma's higher education.

Conference attendees also participated in a farm bill discussion with House Agriculture Committee staff member Bart Fischer and heard from OFB Director Tom Buchanan and Oklahoma Water Resources Board Executive Director J.D. White about the future of water in Oklahoma.

A reception for Farm Bureau members and legislators followed the breakout sessions. During the evening awards banquet, the 2012 Meritorious Service Award winners were recognized, and American Farm Bureau President Bob Stallman presented his group's highest legislative award, the Golden Plow, to U.S. Rep. and Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee Frank Lucas, R-OK. The award is presented annually to one member of the U.S. Senate and one member of the U.S. House of Representatives who have demonstrated strong support for Farm Bureau and agriculture issues.



Left: After addressing OFB members, Bill Burgess (center) joined Comanche County Farm Bureau in front of the crowd. He is pictured with OFB President Mike Spradling (left) and Comanche County FB President Don Hankins.

Below: Congressman James Lankford talks about leadership and several legislative issues with OFB members, including the gridlock in Washington, D.C.



The second day of the conference kicked off with a breakfast presentation by Dana Murphy, Oklahoma Corporation Commission. Stallman also addressed the group with a discussion on the U.S. Farmers and Ranchers Alliance.

Participants attended breakout sessions on social media and successful public relations messages, and U.S. Rep. James Lankford, R-OK, discussed modern leadership roles with members. Lankford is in his second term representing the state's fifth district. He serves on the House budget committee and is chairman of the subcommittee on energy, policy, health care and entitlements.

Following lunch at the OFB state office, farm leaders headed to the state Capitol to visit their state legislators.

Farm Bureau honors five state legislators

Five state legislators received Oklahoma Farm Bureau's Meritorious Service Award Feb. 18, during the annual OFB Leadership Conference.

The Meritorious Service Award is presented to legislators who have a strong voting record for Farm Bureau issues and show support for rural and agricultural issues. The awards are based on a county Farm Bureau's nomination and evaluation of the lawmaker's adherence to the values and issues important to rural Oklahoma.

Receiving the award were Sen. Anthony Sykes, Moore; and Representatives Lisa Billy, Purcell; Tom Newell, Seminole; Mike Jackson, Enid; and Joe Dorman, Rush Springs.

Sykes is chairman of the Judiciary Committee and vice chairman of the committee on Business and Commerce. He also serves on the committees for Agriculture and Rural Development; and Appropriations, as well as the Appropriations Subcommittee on General Government and Transportation. He represents Senate District 24 in south central Oklahoma.

Billy currently is Assistant Majority Whip and is chairman of the A & B Committee for Higher Education. She also serves on the committees for A & B Public Safety; Energy and Aerospace; and Appropriations and Budget. She represents House District 42 in south central Oklahoma.

Newell is vice chairman of the Appropriations and Budget Committee. He also serves on the committees for Agriculture and Wildlife; Judiciary; and Long-Term Care and Senior Services. He represents House District 28 in east central Oklahoma.

As Speaker Pro Tempore, Jackson plays a major leadership role as he is an ex officio voting member on all House Committees. Jackson represents House District 40 in north central Oklahoma.

Dorman, representing House District 65 in southern Oklahoma, is vice chairman of the minority caucus and serves on the committees for Appropriations and Budget; A & B Public Safety; Government Modernization; and Rules.



Sen. Anthony Sykes



Rep. Lisa Billy



Rep. Tom Newell



Rep. Mike Jackson



Rep. Joe Dorman

Farm Bureau awards top legislative award to U.S. Representative Lucas

U.S. Rep. Frank Lucas, R-OK, received American Farm Bureau's Golden Plow Award Feb. 18, during the Oklahoma Farm Bureau's Leadership Conference.

The Golden Plow award is presented annually to one member of the U.S. Senate and one member of the U.S. House of Representatives who have demonstrated strong support for Farm Bureau and agricultural issues.

"As chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, Lucas has worked tirelessly for agriculture and the state of Oklahoma," said OFB President Mike Spradling. "His work on the new farm bill, combined with his many years of service to Oklahoma, makes him a deserving recipient of AFBF's top legislative award."

Representative Lucas is a fifth generation Oklahoman whose family has lived and farmed in the state for more than 100 years. He was first elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1994 and is currently serving his 11th term. Representing Oklahoma's third district, which comprises 32 counties in western and northern Oklahoma, Lucas is well aware of the major rural and agricultural issues.

"I am honored and pleased to accept this award," Lucas said. "Throughout my service in Congress, I have worked hard to be a strong voice for American agriculture because I know how important it is to our state and nation. I have experienced firsthand the devastating effects of drought and appreciate the many challenges farmers endure to make certain we have a stable food and fiber supply. I will continue to work to maintain our investment in rural America and ensure that farm policy is not one of the challenges farmers face."

In addition to his duties as chairman of the agriculture committee, Lucas serves on the House committee on financial services and the committee on science, space and technology.

Prior to his service in Congress, Lucas served five and half years in the Oklahoma State House of Representatives.

Lucas is only the fourth Oklahoma lawmaker to receive the award. Sen. David Boren (1990), Sen. Don Nickles (1992) and Sen. Jim Inhofe (2010) are past recipients.



AFBF President Bob Stallman (right) presents the Golden Plow Award to U.S. Rep. Frank Lucas during the 2013 OFB Leadership Conference.

Governor proclaims Feb. 18-22 Farm Bureau Week

Oklahoma Gov. Mary Fallin made an appearance at the 2013 OFB Leadership Conference to proclaim Feb. 18-22 as Farm Bureau Week.

The week was part of a statewide observance during which county Farm Bureaus hosted receptions, open houses and other events and invited the community to participate.

"We're here to celebrate you, and to say thank you for all that you do to provide a great food supply, a safe food supply and an abundant food supply," Gov. Fallin said during her proclamation address. "Thank you for helping to create jobs and wealth throughout the economy and certainly for raising future generations of farmers and ranchers in our state."

The week was kicked off with the annual leadership conference, Feb. 18-19, at the Skirvin Hotel in Oklahoma

City. Other keynote speakers included U.S. Representatives Frank Lucas, R-OK, and James Lankford, R-OK, AFBF President Bob Stallman and Lawton businessman Bill Burgess.

"This is a time for us to discuss rural issues and explain how Farm Bureau can help improve the lives of rural Oklahomans," said Mike Spradling, Oklahoma Farm Bureau president. "Farm Bureau is a general farm organization with its roots strongly intertwined with the history of this great state," Spradling said. "We understand the importance of representing our members' interests in a clear, responsible manner."



Gov. Mary Fallin proclaims Feb. 18-22 as Farm Bureau Week during the annual leadership conference. Fallin also commended OFB members for their dedication to protecting and advancing Oklahoma agriculture.



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¹ Offer available through 4/1/14. Available on all 2012 and 2013 Chevrolet vehicles (excluding Volt). This offer is not available with some other offers, including private offers. Only customers who have been active members of an eligible Farm Bureau for a minimum of 60 days will be eligible to receive a certificate. Customers can obtain certificates at www.fbverify.com/gm. Farm Bureau and the FB logo are registered service marks of the American Farm Bureau Federation and are used herein under license by General Motors. ² Ownership costs based on 2012 Vincentric Model Level Analysis of full-size pickups in the U.S. retail market.

Oklahoma rural women promote healthy lifestyles during national event

The OFB Leadership Team (formerly the Women's Committee) participated in National Food Check-Out Week, Feb. 17-23, by donating \$3,000 worth of food and gift certificates to the Ronald McDonald House Charities in Tulsa and Oklahoma City.

Additionally, Oklahoma Farm Bureau members worked to educate consumers in their communities by offering tips on how

consumers can stretch their grocery dollars with healthy, nutritious food. Many farmers and ranchers celebrated Food Check-Out Week by making a special effort to reach out to consumers, in-person or through social media, to answer questions about the food they grow or the livestock and poultry they raise.

"Oklahoma's farmers and ranchers share a common concern with consumers when it

comes to putting nutritious meals on the table while sticking to a tight budget," said Kitty Beavers, Duncan, chairman of the OFB Leadership Team.

Now in its 15th year, Food Check-Out Week also highlights America's safe, abundant and affordable food supply, made possible largely by America's productive farmers and ranchers. According to the most recent information from the USDA's Economic Research Service, American families and individuals spend, on average, less than 10 percent of their disposable personal income for food.



Left: OFB Leadership Team members shop at a Tulsa Reasor's grocery store for items to donate to the Tulsa Ronald McDonald House. Pictured from left are OFB Director Phyllis Holcomb, OFB Leadership Team member Lena Henson, Director of OFB Leadership Team Programs Marcia Irvin, OFB Leadership Team member Beverly Delmedico and a helpful Reasor's employee.

Bottom left: OFB Leadership Team Chairman Kitty Beavers and Director of OFB Leadership Team Programs Marcia Irvin (right) present food to Susan Adams and Shari Harrell of the Oklahoma City Ronald McDonald House to celebrate Food Check-Out Week.

Bottom right: The OFB Leadership Team annually donates food to the Ronald McDonald House Charities in Tulsa and Oklahoma City in celebration of Food Check-Out Week.



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AFBF announces national priority issues

Passage of a new five-year farm bill topped the list of priority issues for the American Farm Bureau, announced following the conclusion of the organization's 94th annual convention in Nashville, Tenn. The priority issues are determined by the AFBF board of directors, including OFB President Mike Spradling, who was re-elected to his fourth, two-year term.

"These are critical issues that need our immediate attention," Spradling said. "We will use all available resources to work on these issues."

The national farm group said its 2013 strategic action agenda will include:

- Work for passage of a new farm bill that meets core principles by Sept. 13, 2013. Core principles include a farm income safety net and risk management programs to protect farmers from catastrophes, and programs that provide emergency assistance for livestock and tree producers not covered by federal crop insurance programs;
- Work for passage of Water Resources Development Act and for reform of harbor maintenance trust fund and inland waterways trust fund;
- Defend standards and incentives necessary to further develop U.S. renewable fuels industry;
- Work for legislation in early 2013 that addresses both long- and short-term agricultural labor needs;
- Oppose EPA efforts to expand scope of "navigable waters" subject to federal regulations under the Clean Water Act;
- Oppose expansion of federal Clean Water Act permit requirements for poultry and livestock farmers and ranchers;
- Protect farmers' and ranchers' business tax interests in debate on fiscal policy and tax reform;
- Protect farmers' and ranchers' interests in development of FDA food safety regulations.



Alfalfa County YF&R members Steve and Mindi Clark tell their story during the AFBF Excellence in Agriculture competition finals, Jan. 13, in Nashville. In addition to working full-time jobs off the farm, Steve and Mindi also operate a farm near Burlington.



OFB Leadership Team Chairman Kitty Beavers (center) accepts recognition for the Team's "Pig to Plate" DVD during a luncheon at the AFBF Annual Convention. Each state was given a copy of the popular educational resource during the convention.



The Oklahoma Farm Bureau booth was a big hit during the AFBF tradeshow. OFB members partnered with the Oklahoma Wheat Commission to serve fresh wheat bread and cinnamon rolls to thousands of attendees. OFB and Wheat Commission members are pictured with longtime agricultural broadcaster Orion Samuelson (center).

Retired Astronaut Mark Kelly Inspires Farm Bureau Members

Retired astronaut Mark Kelly delivered an inspirational keynote address during the American Farm Bureau Federation's 94th Annual Meeting.

Kelly sprinkled his uplifting and sometimes humorous remarks with anecdotes about his exceptional career and life with his wife Gabrielle Giffords, the former member of Congress who survived an assassination attempt in January 2011.

Growing up in New Jersey as the child of two police officers set the stage for the philosophy that has guided the down-to-earth Kelly since boyhood: "Have a goal, a plan and then work hard." He modestly described himself as "an underachiever who had to overcome a lack of natural aptitude" at many of the skills required to succeed as a Naval aviator, test pilot and, later, astronaut.

"How good you are at the beginning is not a good indicator of how good you can become," Kelly said. He also shared the inspiration he finds in the strength of his wife, who continues to recover from gunshot wounds. She reminds him nearly every day to "Deny the existence of failure."

In his closing comments to the appreciative audience of Farm Bureau members, Kelly shared a few words from Giffords: "Be passionate, be courageous, be strong, be your best."

Kelly is one of America's most experienced pilots and has logged more than 6,000 flight hours aboard more than 50 different aircraft. His experience includes 375 aircraft carrier landings, 39 combat missions, more than 50 days in space and service as commander of the space shuttle Endeavor's final mission.

In addition to his experience as an

astronaut and Navy captain, Kelly is a prostate cancer survivor and best-selling author. "Moustronaut: A Partially True Story," is a children's book written by Kelly that is slated for release in October.



Retired astronaut Mark Kelly encourages Farm Bureau members to have a goal, a plan and then work hard during his keynote address at the AFBF Convention in January.

OFB leader re-elected to national board

Oklahoma Farm Bureau President Mike Spradling was re-elected Jan. 15 to serve a two-year term on the American Farm Bureau board of directors. The election occurred during the 94th Annual American Farm Bureau Convention in Nashville, Tenn.

"I am extremely proud to represent Oklahoma on the AFBF board," Spradling

said. "I will continue to push for critical issues impacting Oklahoma agriculture, including a new farm bill, immigration reform and reducing government regulations."

Representing the southern region, Spradling joins 16 other state Farm Bureau presidents on the AFBF board. The Oklahoma leader was first elected to the national board in 2007.

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2013 Oklahoma Youth Expo March 15-26, Oklahoma City



Above: Oklahoma Farm Bureau teamed up with Bank of Western Oklahoma and Touchstone Energy to purchase the 2013 Oklahoma Youth Expo Grand Champion Barrow, exhibited by Kate Jackson of the Mountain View-Gotebo 4-H Club. The hog was among 38 animals OFB purchased at the sale.

Left: OFB President Mike Spradling (left) accepts the 2012 OYE Volume Buyer Award from OYE Board of Director Chairman Bob Funk in recognition of last year's sale.

Right: OFB President Mike Spradling shows a hog with Woodward FFA member Ashton Baggs during the 2013 OYE Legislative Show, March 19.



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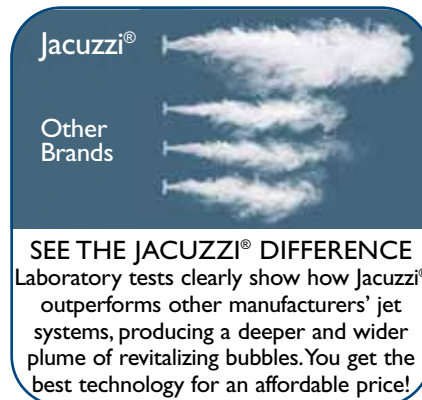
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OFB leaders appointed to governor's water policy advisory council

Gov. Mary Fallin appointed two Oklahoma Farm Bureau leaders to her Water Policy for 2060 Advisory Council.

Tom Buchanan of Altus and Bob Drake of Davis were selected to fill new positions on the advisory board.

"We are happy to see rural Oklahoma and rural water interests so well represented on the governor's advisory council," said Oklahoma Farm Bureau President Mike Spradling. "Tom and Bob represent Oklahoma agriculture in the many rolls they fill in their communities and in our state, and we know

they will continue to speak for rural Oklahoma on the governor's water policy council."

Buchanan represents OFB's second district on the OFB state board of directors. He farms in southwest Oklahoma and manages the Lugert-Altus Irrigation District. Buchanan also serves on the Oklahoma Water Resources Board.

Drake is president of Murray County Farm Bureau and has previously served on the OFB state board. He farms and ranches in southern Oklahoma, and he is a current member of the Oklahoma Water Resources



Tom Buchanan



Bob Drake

Board. Drake also served on the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality Board.

The Water Policy for 2060 Advisory Council was formed during the 2012 Oklahoma legislative session to make recommendations for the governor and legislature to ensure Oklahoma's water needs are met through conservation.

Young Farmers & Ranchers visit state Capitol

Right: YF&R State Committee members Clint and Jessica Wilcox meet with Rep. Jeff Hickman during the YF&R Legislative Day. The Major County couple discussed several local issues with their representative and thanked him for his support of agriculture.

Below: YF&R members visited the Oklahoma Capitol March 19 as part of their annual legislative day. Participants had the opportunity to hear an update from OFB's public policy division and visit with their legislators. Pictured with the group are OFB State Director Tom Buchanan and Sen. Larry Boggs, former OFB State Director.



Longtime OFB leader honored

Oklahoma Farm Bureau honored Billy Gibson, Feb. 18, for his more than 36 years of service as a volunteer leader for the farm organization.

"Billy is a very special person who has dedicated many years to serving Oklahoma Farm Bureau, including two separate tenures on the OFB Board of Directors, representing District 8," said OFB President Mike Spradling.

Gibson was raised on a ranch near Ada in Pontotoc County. He served his country as an Air Force pilot, flying combat missions over Vietnam and later serving in the Pentagon.

Upon retirement from the Air Force, the Oklahoma farm boy felt the pull from the Oklahoma prairie and returned to the family ranch where he has spent the last 38 years.

During that time, Gibson believed it was important to work as a volunteer Farm Bureau leader at the county, state and national levels.

"This honor means a lot to me and my family, especially my children and grandchildren," Gibson said. "I have always believed in the Farm Bureau mission to improve the lives of rural Oklahomans."

In January at the AFBF convention in Nashville, Billy and his wife Janet were interviewed by Story Corps, affiliated with National Public Radio and the national archives in the Library of Congress. They were just one of a handful of farm families from around the country chosen to have their life story preserved for eternity.

"This is only way to get the whole story told. Reach out there and give it to the world like it is," Gibson said.



Billy and Janet have two children, six grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

Billy Gibson

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OFB Commodity Corner

Oklahoma has more than 34 million acres devoted to agricultural production, and there are approximately 85,500 farms and ranches in our state. We are the fifth leading source for beef production in the United States and the fourth leading source for wheat. Oklahoma's swine, poultry and cotton industries also have a notable presence in U.S. markets. It is clear to see why agriculture in Oklahoma is the second largest industry in our state.

Oklahoma's farmers and ranchers are certainly feeding and clothing the world, and it is easy to see agriculture is a large profit center and major driving force in our state's economy. However, in spite of the impressive numbers, Oklahoma farmers and ranchers still face many serious challenges.

Economic Challenges

As of February 11, Russia disregarded the fact that U.S. meat is produced to the highest safety standards in the world and suspended all U.S. meat imports. By doing so, Russia is failing to abide by its obligations as a member of the World Trade Organization. Russia's disregard to the proven scientific fact that we produce the safest supply of meat in the world will ultimately hurt Oklahoma's farmers and ranchers' bottom dollar.

Environmental Challenges

With the most severe and extensive drought in at least 25 years, Oklahoma's farmers and ranchers have suffered well in excess of \$2 billion in drought related losses, seriously affecting Oklahoma agriculture. Impacts on the crop and livestock sectors and have a strong potential to affect food prices at the retail level.

Social Challenges

Animal rights groups have increasingly turned their focus to agriculture, utilizing misleading undercover videos and multi-million dollar campaigns in an effort to promote their fact less ideologies and damage animal agriculture. The research now shows these damaging campaigns affect our beef, pork and poultry industries and have significant negative effects on U.S. meat demand.

Oklahoma Farm Bureau leads the way in protecting Oklahoma agriculture and continues to be a voice for our farmers and ranchers, all in the hope of making the path a little easier for them to produce the safest, most affordable and abundant food supply in the world.

— By Chris Kidd

Vice President of Membership and Organization

Above left: Lincoln County Farm Bureau member Roselle Herrmann picks a bag of spinach during a tour stop in northern LeFlore County. The field of greens is owned by Allen Canning Company.

Above right: Larry Pollard of H & P Logging explains the tree de-limbing process as a de-limber works in the background. Farm Bureau members toured Weyerhaeuser forestry operations in the Broken Bow area.

OFB members ventured to Oklahoma's "Little Dixie" March 25-27 to learn more about the area's diverse agricultural industry and historical significance during the 2013 OFB Commodity Tour.

The first stop on the tour was in McAlester, where members visited the McAlester State Penitentiary and learned about the prison's farm and dairy facilities. Then it was on to the McAlester Army Ammunition Plant, where Col. Timothy Beckner discussed the plant's purpose within the Armed Services. The plant not only constructs ammunition, but also demilitarizes weapons and ammo.

OFB Director Tom Buchanan and Don Faulkner of Talihina met tour members at Sardis Lake to discuss water issues. Faulkner discussed the history of the lake and its relationship with Oklahoma City, while also presenting southeast Oklahoma's perspective on the state's water issues. Buchanan, who also serves on the Oklahoma Water Resources Board, offered information on OFB and OWRB policies.

Day two kicked off at the Oklahoma State University Kiamichi Forestry Research Station outside of Idabel. Staff members from OSU and the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry talked about several forestry management research initiatives, including genetics programs, seed production and industry relations.

After a tour of the auction yard at Brinkley's Auction in Idabel, participants visited a forested area near Broken Bow, where Weyerhaeuser, a national forestry products company, is currently harvesting lumber. Members learned about harvesting management practices and watched as trees were cut, de-limbed and stacked for transport out of the timberland.

The final day began at the Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture near Poteau, where members heard from several researchers about horticulture, livestock and forestry projects on the Kerr Ranch. The Kerr Center provides research and information for farmers, ranchers, gardeners and educators from around Oklahoma.

A stop at a Farrell-Cooper coal mine outside of Stigler offered a look into the mining industry. Farrell-Cooper Vice President Bob Cooper spoke to members about the company's operations and the land reclamation efforts in Oklahoma.

After lunch at the Tamaha Community Center and a group picture in front of Oklahoma's oldest Oak tree, participants traveled to the Arkansas River bottom in northern LeFlore County to pick spinach. Representatives from Allen Canning, the owner of the spinach field, were on hand to answer questions about their operations.

A stop at the Robert S. Kerr Lock and Dam and Reservoir rounded out the three-day tour. Members watched as a crude oil barge was lowered 48 feet to continue its route down the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System. The lock and dam averages just over three barges a day.

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Pork producers step up to fight hunger in Oklahoma

After successfully launching the Beef for Backpacks program last fall, Oklahoma Farm Bureau and fellow agricultural organizations are now calling on pork producers to help feed Oklahoma's hungry children. Much like Beef for Backpacks, Pork for Packs will provide nutritious pork sticks for the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma's Food for Kids program.

Oklahoma livestock producers have donated more than 50 head of cattle and pigs so far this year for the programs, and that means thousands of Oklahoma school children will now have adequate protein to supplement their diets.

"I am overwhelmed by the generosity of our livestock producers," said Rodney Bivens, executive director of the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma. "This is a great opportunity to help educate the public that the food is there because someone has worked hard to produce it, and we are so thankful to have livestock owners willing to donate the food."

Both programs are collaboration among the Oklahoma Farming and Ranching Foundation, Oklahoma Farm Bureau, Oklahoma Beef Council, Oklahoma Pork

Council, Oklahoma State University Food and Agricultural Products Center, Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma, Ralphs Meat Company in Perkins and Chickasha Meats.

Each week, volunteers at the Regional Food Bank stuff backpacks with nutritious food and snacks that are handed out to school children to supplement their weekend diets. Beef and pork sticks supplied by program partners provide a valuable source of protein. The backpacks are an integral part of the Food for Kids program.

The program serves 475 elementary schools in 53 counties across central and western Oklahoma, providing backpacks to more than 13,500 chronically hungry children each week.

"We are excited by the opportunity to provide a nutritious source of protein to

the children," said Monica Wilke, executive director of the Oklahoma Farming and Ranching Foundation. "We estimate that between 20,000 and 25,000 beef and pork sticks will be needed every month to supply all of the hungry children who currently benefit from the backpack program."

Every pound of donated meat produces approximately 8 to 10 protein sticks.

To help sustain the program, program partners are asking beef – and now pork producers – to consider a commitment of at least one animal per year.

"This kind of commitment will guarantee the programs continued success and be a win-win situation for both producers and the children," Bivens said.

For more information on how to donate livestock, contact Thad Doye, (405) 523-2307, thad.doye@okfb.org. One can also go to www.okfarmbureau.org or www.regionalfoodbank.org.



OFB hosts legislative reception



Above: Sen. Ron Sharp, Rep. Ed Cannaday, Rep. Curtis McDaniel and Rep. Mike Brown all take time to visit during the OFB legislative reception.

Left: Oklahoma senators and representatives visited the OFB state office Feb. 6 for a legislative reception welcoming them back for the beginning of session.

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Rich Robinson
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Carwash for meat?

FAPC shifts into high gear and merges with national company to benefit state's food industry

You enter onto an automated conveyor belt rolling through a darkened tunnel, while passing several pieces of equipment, each with a specific purpose – rinse, soap, foam and dry. You exit squeaky clean and free of flaws.

What if this same concept was applied to meat products to eliminate possible bacteria that could harm consumers and devastate a meat manufacturer?

Oklahoma State University's Robert M. Kerr Food & Agricultural Products Center is doing just that ... Researching what some are calling a "carwash for meat."

PREPARING TO ENTER

The FAPC is currently collaborating with Ross Industries, Inc., headquartered in Midland, Va., to research the use of antimicrobial spray treatments on blade tenderized meat.

"Many companies in the meat industry use mechanical tenderization to render cuts of beef a little tenderer than they currently are," said Peter Muriana, FAPC food microbiologist.

One form of mechanical tenderization includes blade tenderization, which consists of a group of blades piercing a cut of meat. While this process improves tenderness, it can also create an opportunity for potential external bacteria to enter the meat.

"The United States Department of Agriculture - Food Safety and Inspection Services has recently taken issue with mechanically tenderized beef as non-intact

beef," Muriana said. "The concern is that pathogenic *E. coli* 0157:H7, or other Shiga-toxin producing *E. coli* serotypes, may be on the surface of the meat and be translocated into the interior of what may appear as solid beef cuts, such as tenderized steaks. It could

Peter Muriana, a FAPC food microbiologist, holds a blade-tenderized cut of meat that was treated with an antimicrobial spray treatment.

manifest itself as a health hazard if someone were to consume a tenderized steak that was cooked rare or medium rare."

ROLLING THROUGH THE PROCESS

To tackle this issue and reduce the risk of bacteria, the FAPC teamed up with Ross Industries, Inc., one of the largest manufacturers of meat tenderizers, food

packaging equipment and food processing systems, to research the application of antimicrobial sprays to treat meat.

"It's kind of like a brushless car wash for meat," Muriana said, to put in laymen's terms.

The meat gets loaded in the front end of the machine and is pulled through an antimicrobial spray system. Then, the meat continues on and reaches the blades used for tenderization.

"We wanted to prove that a blade tenderizer with an intervention integrated into it would prevent the situation or risk of a recall, and wanted to conduct research at an academic facility," said Wayne Spillner, Ross Industries, Inc. manager of processing equipment development.

The initial project included using 14 different antimicrobials from 10 different suppliers, all approved for use on meat by the FDA and USDA.

"We examined the antimicrobials for effectiveness against *E. coli* 0157:H7 on



inoculated lean beef discs passing through the Ross spray system, as well as the effectiveness of antimicrobials on beef subprimals in combination with blade tenderization,” Muriana said.

A CLEAN EXIT

According to Muriana, the initial results revealed that those antimicrobials showing the best reduction in the lean beef discs demonstrated the least translocation during beef tenderization.

“We proved that if you have an effective intervention product, you don’t have to worry, but if you don’t have an effective product, yes, a blade tenderizer can possibly drag any potential pathogenic bacteria on the surface into the internals of the meat,” Spillner said.

With the outcome of the results, Ross Industries, Inc., implemented spray systems on the front end of its commercial blade tenderizers.

“Over 50 percent of the meat in the marketplace has been tenderized to make it palatable,” Spillner said. “If we can’t make non-intact meat safe, the price of meat is going to be exceptionally high.”

According to Spillner, the research was accepted by USDA-FSIS, and has been referenced in many articles, which has led to more interest in the research.

“Having availability of an academic outlet in research is beneficial when a customer comes to us and asks ‘how can I do a validation study?’ and we have somewhere to send them,” Spillner said. “It’s been a good collaborative partnership for getting additional customers to OSU, as well as Ross industries, Inc., but the person who wins the most is the general processing industry, where they get to see the results once we have them summarized and publishable.”

The data has been advantageous for meat

equipment companies, processors and antimicrobial suppliers.

“Antimicrobial suppliers are using our data to help entice customers, and Ross Industries, Inc., has sold more machines,” Muriana said. “The safer their customers are, the more capable they are of selling.”

John Williams, president of Chef’s Requested, said he supports this research and stresses how food safety is a critical priority for food manufacturers.

“You can address a product’s flavor, quality, how it eats and appears on the plate, but before anything else, the product must be assured to be 100 percent wholesome and safe to consume,” Williams said. “This research plays a huge role in addressing this issue.”

This research has benefited Chef’s Requested in revising the composition of their meat marinades. Based on this research, and previous work done by Muriana, Chef’s Requested was able to utilize one of the antimicrobials that allowed an enhancement in flavor, plus increasing the shelf life of their refrigerated beef products.

DOWN THE ROAD AHEAD

Sherry Nichols, wife of a beef producer in Arnett, Okla., and avid beef consumer, said she believes the food safety research being conducted at the FAPC is beneficial to not only beef producers and manufacturers, but also consumers.

“The United States has the safest food supply in the world,” Nichols said. “However, with that being said, the food industry is constantly working to make sure that food is continuously safe for consumers.”

This kind of research is what limits the amount of outbreaks caused by foodborne illnesses.

“The livelihoods of food manufacturers are on the line if there are outbreaks or food

recalls,” Nichols said. “Any kind of food safety research is considered insurance for their livelihoods and the health of consumers.”

Williams said this research is relevant to any consumer who purchases meat products.

“This research benefits consumers in that they can continue to enjoy a beef steak or roast at a cooked temperature that they love; rare to well done, with the assurance that it is safe,” Williams said.

Although they have achieved these results, the FAPC and Ross Industries, Inc., will continue to work together to carry on research regarding blade tenderization.

“We will continue to research with Ross Industries, Inc., in the future to find additional, better solutions,” Muriana said.

The discovery of this research will lead to continuous research development to ensure safe and wholesome products are supplied to consumers.

“The more intervention effectiveness we can apply to fruits and vegetables, as well as the meat and poultry supply, means the less the public has to worry about,” Spillner said. “If we make food safe without having to do the extra steps, the food supply chain is going to be safer, and America is going to be healthier.”

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54th Annual LeFlore High School Alumni Banquet, Saturday, May 11th, New HS Gym, Registration 5pm, Dinner 7pm, for more information contact Susan Cantwell at 918-647-6327

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MOBILE HOMES, RVs

For Sale: 1970 Brookwood, 12'x56' mobile home, 1 1/2 bath, 2 brm, 20'x14' room addition, 20'x12' carport, all 16 gauge metal roof, completely furnished, \$19,900, call 405-449-3479 or 405-640-6079

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ASIAN FLANK STEAK (SERVES 4)

Ingredients:

1 pound Certified Angus Beef® flank steak (Learn more about this cut)
1/2 cup garlic-flavored teriyaki sauce
1/2 cup thinly sliced scallions
1 tablespoon rice wine vinegar
1 tablespoon sesame oil
1 teaspoon finely chopped lemon zest
1 teaspoon sesame seeds
1/2 teaspoon minced ginger
1/2 teaspoon spicy Asian garlic sauce

Instructions:

Combine teriyaki sauce, scallions, vinegar, oil, lemon zest, sesame seeds, ginger and garlic sauce in large, zipper-locking plastic bag. Add beef, press air out of bag and close top securely. Turn bag over several times to coat steak well. Marinate in refrigerator for 2 to 6 hours, turning bag over occasionally.

Remove steak from marinade; discard marinade. Grill steak to desired doneness. Let steak rest for 5 minutes and thinly slice steak across the grain.



SIMPLE VIETNAMESE PORK NOODLE BOWL (SERVES 6)

Ingredients:

1 1/4 pound pork tenderloin, trimmed and cut into 1/4-inch slices
12 ounces rice noodles*
4 cups coleslaw mix, prepared*
1/4 red onion, thinly sliced
4 1/2 cups chicken broth, reduced-sodium
4 1/2 teaspoons fish sauce*
1 teaspoon soy sauce, reduced-sodium
2 tablespoons canola oil, or other neutral-flavored oil
1/4 cup basil leaves, fresh, thinly sliced
1 lime, cut into 6 wedges

Instructions:

Prepare the noodles according to package directions. Arrange the noodles in 6 serving bowls. Top with the slaw mix and onion and set aside.

While the noodles are cooking, in a medium saucepan, combine the chicken broth, fish sauce, and soy sauce and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat to very low, to keep the broth just below a simmer.

In a very large skillet over medium-high heat, warm the oil. Add the pork and cook until browned and pork reaches an internal temperature of 145 degrees F., 1 to 2 minutes per side (you may have to do this in batches). Let stand at room temperature for three minutes. Arrange the pork on top of the noodle bowls.

Ladle in the piping-hot broth, garnish with the basil and lime wedges, and serve.

* You can find rice noodles and fish sauce in the ethnic or Asian section of most major supermarkets. You can find prepared slaw mix, typically a combination of green cabbage, red cabbage, and carrot, in the produce section of most major supermarkets.



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