

Rhode Island Farm Bureau Newsletter



2021 RIFB Annual Meeting Update

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Rhode Island Farm Bureau made the decision **not** to hold our traditional Annual Meeting. On November 19, voting members cast their votes for the 2020 slate at the RI Farm Bureau office in West Greenwich, RI after COVID caused the original voting location of the Coventry-West Greenwich Elks Lodge to temporarily close.

President Henry B. Wright III of Exeter ran uncontested and was elected to a third term. Kevin Breene of West Greenwich was elected Vice President. The following board members have been re-elected to the Board of Directors for another 2-year term: Vinny Confreda, Peter Gavitt, Joe Polseno, Wayne Salisbury and Tyler Young. The full board is listed to the right.

As mentioned in the October newsletter, no resolutions were received and the resolutions approved at the 2019 meeting will be carried forward for 2021.



The 2021 AFBF National Convention was to be held in San Diego this January, however due to the COVID-19 pandemic it has been changed to a fully virtual convention. For the first time ever, this will allow all Farm Bureau members to attend the convention albeit virtual in nature.

This year's American Farm Bureau Virtual Convention will be held January 10-13, 2021, and for the first time ever, registration fees are being waived to give all Farm Bureau members and anyone interested in agriculture the opportunity to experience one of agriculture's premier events from the comfort and safety of home.

"We are excited to open up the doors of this event and to bring home the high-quality content our attendees have come to expect from our events," AFBF President Zippy Duvall said. "Our featured speakers this year are no strangers to Farm Bureau. We are honored to have Mike Rowe, Rorke Denver and Beth Ford join us as we reflect on this unique year and press on, stronger together for agriculture and our rural communities." (cont. pg 2)

Volume 22, Issue 1

January 2021

Board of Directors

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AFBF National Convention Goes Virtual, cont.

Participate in educational workshops to advance your leadership skills, expand your business acumen, and gain deep insight into the trends and realities impacting food production. Witness cutting edge innovation in agriculture, hear from powerful speakers, and explore the virtual trade show to build a stronger network, shop featured products, and idea-share with other state and county Farm Bureaus.

This open invitation is a rare opportunity to attend the American Farm Bureau convention free of charge simply by registering. Registration will provide access to live sessions as well as special on demand programs focused on hot topics in agriculture. Featured live events include:

- AFBF President Zippy Duvall's annual address
- Ag Innovation Challenge
- Young Farmers & Ranchers competitions
- Foundation Night In, featuring soon-to-be-announced musical performances
- Workshops focused on what farmers and ranchers need to know in 2021

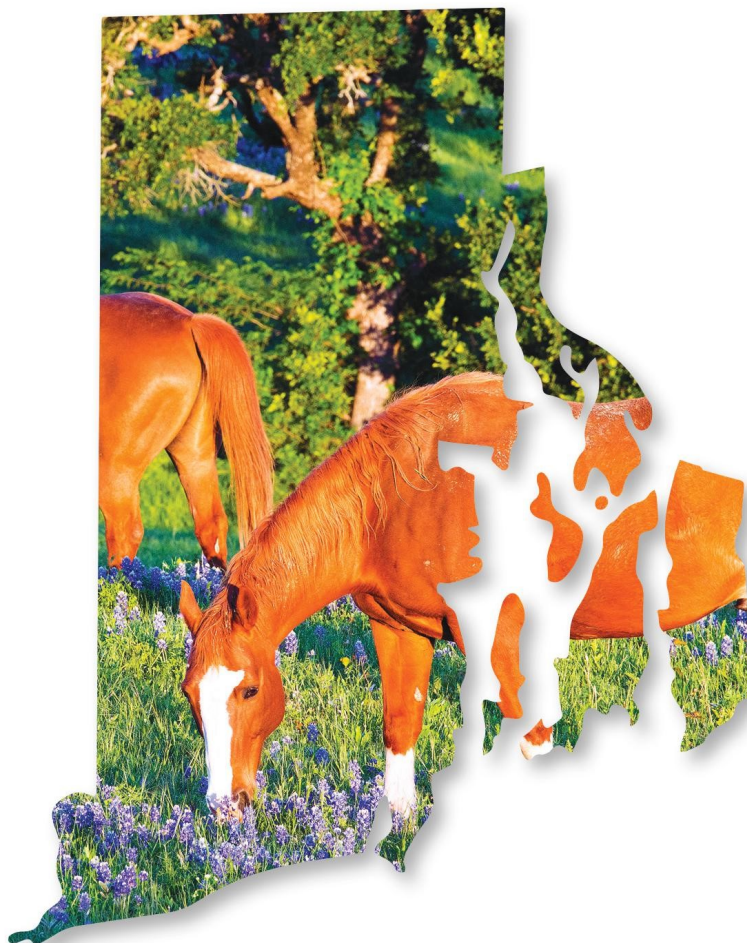
Workshop topics range from the future of the livestock industry to financial planning for disasters and from standing up for agriculture with effective advocacy to sustainability in 2021 and what it will mean for farmers and ranchers.

If you are reading the newsletter online, you may view the full agenda [here](#) and register for free at <https://annualconvention.fb.org/>. (These links are available on our website, you **must** have internet access to register and attend this virtual convention.)

Featured speakers include star of Dirty Jobs and author, Mike Rowe; Navy Seal Commander, Rorke Denver; and Land O' Lakes President and CEO, Beth Ford. Country singers Sara Evans and Phil Vassar will perform at the American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture's Foundation Night In on Jan. 11 at 5 p.m. Eastern. The online Foundation Night In is open to all who register for the American Farm Bureau's Virtual Convention, Jan. 10-13. Registration for Virtual Convention is free and open to the public.

The first 1,200 people to register for Foundation Night In will receive a free copy of the Foundation's 2021 Book of the Year, which will be revealed at the event. The Book of the Year author and illustrator will be virtually on hand to receive their recognition.





LET'S TALK ABOUT THE STATE OF YOUR HORSE FARM INSURANCE

When you dedicate your life and well-being to the well-being of horses, you need more than just a policy—you need an ally. A one-size-fits-all insurance policy isn't for you. You deserve a customized coverage plan and American National gets it. An American National equine professionals insurance policy can provide you with a flexible package that allows you to tailor a policy to match your individual needs, with coverage options that include liability coverage, property coverage, and optional enhancements that cover things like valuable paper records, golf carts and vehicles, show judge liability and more. Find a local agent at an.insure/rifb



American National is a group of companies writing a broad array of insurance products and services. Products and services may not be available in all states. Terms, conditions and eligibility requirements will apply. Life insurance and annuity products may be underwritten by American National Insurance Company, Galveston, Texas. Property and casualty products and services may be underwritten by Farm Family Casualty Insurance Company, Glenmont, New York.

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Become GAP Certified

If you are receiving this, you have likely heard of the RI GAP program and know that there is a system in place and support for growers in Rhode Island that may need to undergo a RI GAP audit. We are well into the growing season, but we have developed a system to facilitate participation in this program for this unique season.

You can learn more about the RI GAP program by:

1. Visiting [The RI Produce Safety Portal](#)
2. Reviewing [RI GAP Certification During Covid-19](#)

3. Contacting Ananda Fraser:

Produce Safety Program Coordinator

RI DEM – Division of Agriculture

401-537-8093

Ananda.Fraser@dem.ri.gov

All of the above information can be accessed on our rifb.org website for those with internet access.

If you do not have access to the Internet, please call Ananda Fraser (listed above) to find out more about becoming GAP certified.

Continue to Receive the Printed Newsletter.

If you are a **Friend of Farmer** (\$35) member, this January 2021 printed copy will be the last one you will receive in the mail unless you call, email or write to ask to remain on the list for the printed copy. We want to be conscious of waste and costs, but we are happy to continue to mail a printed copy to any of our members that request it. Please call the office and speak to Rebecca to be placed on the **Printed Newsletter list** to receive your free newsletter by mail. Digital copies are always available to read on our website at rifb.org/

Current **Full-Time** and **Part-Time Farmer** members will continue to receive a mailed copy unless you request digital copy only.

Farmers- Do you have something to sell or trade?

Are you looking for a particular implement or service? Do you need seasonal or full-time help? Are you someone looking for a summer or full-time ag-related job?

The New England Ag Exchange Website is a collaborative effort between Farm Fresh RI, the Young Farmer Network, RI DEM Division of Ag and the RI Farm Bureau. It provides an online forum to buy/sell/trade, share advice, seek/offer land or labor, and more.

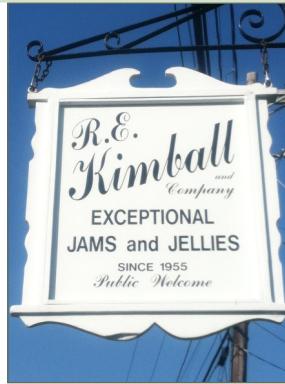
Visit <https://exchange.farmfreshri.org/> to see how it can help you!

Need to apply for or renew your pesticide license?

While pesticide license training is normally done cooperatively with URI, DEM will be doing **testing only** until on-campus classes resume. Testing is available for **all** pesticide applicator licenses and categories. There is currently no list of dates as of yet, but exams will be scheduled based on demand. Study material can be made available for pickup at DEM's Agriculture office. For more information on how to take your pesticide license test or to get study materials, please contact Harold.Puckett@dem.ri.gov or Kimberly.Lavoie@dem.ri.gov.

If you do not have Internet access, you may contact Harold Puckett at DEM Ag 401- 222-2781, Ext 7261 or Kim LaVoie at DEM Ag 401-222-2781, Ext 4513.

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DID YOU KNOW THAT YOU NEED A CONSERVATION PLAN?



WHAT IS A CONSERVATION PLAN?

A conservation plan is a tool designed to help you better manage the natural resources on your farm and in turn may help you save money.

If you are in the farm program or are thinking about applying, this is a great opportunity!

Funding has been secured for a limited number of plans. Contact us today to assure you are approved for this special offer before all slots are filled.

You can get a \$950 valued plan for only \$100 under special project funds!

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT YOUR DISTRICT:

Eastern Conservation District (Bristol & Newport Counties):
Sara Churgin, schurgin.ericd@gmail.com | 401-934-0840

Southern Conservation District (Kent & Washington Counties):
Gina Fuller, gfuller@sracd.org | 401-500-0422

Northern Conservation District (Providence County):
Gina DeMarco, gdemarco.nricd@gmail.com | 401-934-0840



Southern Rhode Island Conservation District



The RI Conservation Districts are working with NRCS to write Farm Conservation Plans for the Farm Forest and Open Space (FFOS) Program of Rhode Island. USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.



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Updating Your Email Address

RIFB wants to provide you with timely updates on legislation, meetings and other important information. We have worked hard to ensure that all member emails are correctly categorized to ensure that you receive our emails. If you do not currently receive emails from **RI Farm** (rifarm@rifb.org), please email us (**using your preferred email**) or use the Contact Form on our website to provide us with the best email to use.

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Meet the RIFB Board, January Edition

Edwin “Scooter” LaPrise of EMMA Acres in Exeter and his wife, Cynthia, purchased a small house and 12 acres in 1990 and named their new farm EMMA Acres after their four children: Elizabeth, Matthew, Maggie and Alexandra. The animals came on gradually, first some pigs, sheep and then beef cattle. In 2002 they purchased dairy calves for all 4 children and the kids soon began showing them. In 2004 Scooter started milking a handful of cows and raising veal and pigs. By 2006 he was milking the kids’ animals at home, with a total of 25 animals spread out on dairy farms in three states. That year they started building the home farm up, adding in a milking parlor. In February 2008, milking about 28 cows, they shipped their first load of milk with Agri-mark. The most they have milked was 42 cows, and in May 2020 Agri-Mark put them under a quota requiring them to drop from milking 36 cows down to 28. Currently, EMMA Acres has dairy cows, pigs, 100 chickens, and all bull calves remain on the farm and raised as veal. In October of 2019, the LaPrise family opened their farm store, and they started a beef operation in 2020. They have transitioned some of their dairy breeding over to beef bulls, also buying a few Hereford heifers to start breeding with the end goal of selling their farm-raised beef in their new farm store. They sell direct to the public at the farm, offering a curbside delivery option. EMMA Acres also offers online sales via What’s App.

Scooter was an Eagle Scout; he also held the offices of State Treasurer and then President of RI FFA. He is currently on the Ag Committee for the Big E and is a member of the Big E Board of Trustees. Scooter was the head of the Big E’s RI Dairy program from 2010-2018, and a Big E chaperone from 2003 to 2010 before becoming Head Chaperone. He is currently the New England 4-H Dairy Superintendent. EMMA Acres is also a 3-time winner of the Green Pastures award. Scooter was elected to the RIFB Board in 2011. He and his wife, Cynthia, have 4 children and 5 grandchildren.

Don Hopkins, of Hopkins Southdowns in North Scituate, was given his first two sheep at the age of eight by the family’s physician. The local, rural family doctor told a young Don, “You have a lot of property, and so you should have a couple of sheep.” It has certainly morphed from there. Don began showing them, first locally and then regionally, and he was showing sheep nationally by the age of 17.

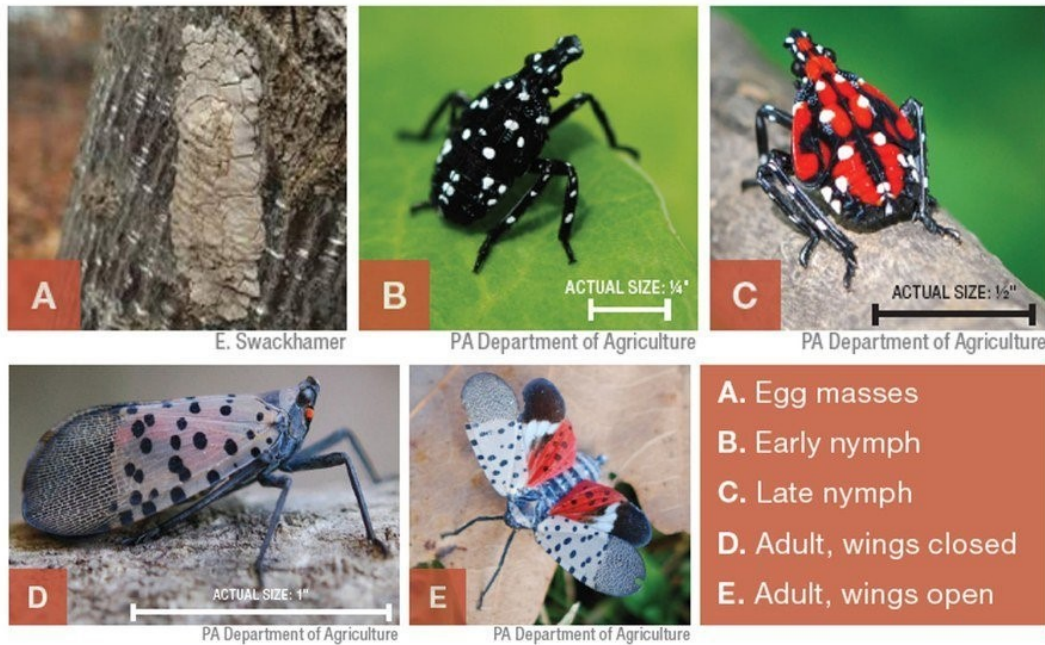
Don’s farm has been in his family for over 100 years. He and his wife, Deb, bought it from his parents when they were in their 20’s. The pair worked for a couple of farms in Missouri and Illinois before they moved back to settle in RI permanently. Don and Deb have always raised Southdown sheep. The breed is primarily raised for its meat, while the wool is more of a by-product with this breed. Having just sold 60 of the top-end of their pure-bred flock, all their replacement and good Southdown brood ewes, they have about 200 sheep now.

The Hopkins direct market their lamb to the public from the farm, at farmers markets and through four home delivery services—Market Mobile, What’s Good, Pat’s Pastured and Simmons Organics. It’s been totally necessary due to loss of restaurant business. Don has concerns about all the customer enthusiasm created due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and what will happen when this is over. Don hopes they will be able to hold onto 15% of their new customers. Home delivery provides the consumer with a sense of security using a non-contact option to receive local product.

Don is a past board member and past president of the American Southdown Breeders’ Association for a combined 20 years. He is a member of the New England Sheep and Wool Growers Association, and chairman of the New England Sheep Sale Committee for over 20 years. Don is also past president of RI Raised Livestock Association. He was elected to the RIFB Board of Directors in 2017.

Don and Deb have raised 2 national champion Southdowns. They have two children, Bradley and Jessica, both of whom grew up showing the family’s sheep.

Spotted Lanternfly update: populations are moving closer to Rhode Island



The invasive spotted lanternfly (SLF, *Lycorma delicatula*) has moved even closer to Rhode Island borders this year. This past summer/fall, new SLF populations were reported in Connecticut and New York, and several interceptions of a single SLF (but no population found later) were reported in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Maine. The list of states that now have SLF populations include Pennsylvania, Ohio, Virginia, West Virginia, New Jersey, Maryland, Delaware, New York, and Connecticut. Although not currently found in Rhode Island, an introduction into our state is likely within the next year.

SLF spreads easily and rapidly by “hitch-hiking” in vehicles or on infested equipment, materials, and commodities. Once transported to a new area, cryptic egg masses may go unnoticed, or egg-bearing females may lay new egg masses. SLF is known to feed on a broad list of host plants and the phloem-feeding nymphs and adults move frequently as they search for favorable hosts. These insects are largely considered a plant stressor; while direct feeding may not kill trees, it can significantly damage hosts, especially when present in combination with other stressors (such as disease or weather). However, it’s still possible for SLF to cause significant damage to healthy host trees following high infestation levels or multiple years of sustained feeding.

SLF is a concern for all Rhode Island farmers, even if they don’t grow crops that SLF will feed on. An economic impact report estimated the impact on Pennsylvania’s economy within the quarantine zone to be \$50.1 million per year, and the impact on agriculture alone to be \$13.1 million per year. This estimate is conservative, as it does not account for SLF spreading into other PA counties. Whether it is grape growers experiencing grapevine death and yield loss, nursery growers experiencing quarantine compliance issues, or other operations experiencing production and shipping delays, SLF has the potential to impact the Rhode Island farming community.

To prepare for a possible SLF introduction, learn how to identify SLF and which life stages are present seasonally, so you can be on the lookout for this insect. Look for SLF on preferred hosts such as tree-of-heaven, grapevines, black walnut and maples. Visit www.uri.edu/biocontrol/spotted-lanternfly for information on SLF identification, spread, and best management practices. If you suspect you found SLF, take a photo and collect a specimen into a plastic container. Report the find to www.dem.ri.gov/reportspottedlanternfly. You can also email photos to the URI Biocontrol Lab at lisat@uri.edu or drop specimens off at the Biocontrol Lab on the Kingston Campus.

Alana Russell, Research Assistant, URI Biocontrol Lab.

President's Corner

Uncertainty.

Going forward there is a lot of uncertainty in the environment of agriculture as we move forward into 2021.

There are new political players in Ag committees at both the state and federal levels, in both the senate and house. Our national delegation has stayed the same but our state government has major changes. There is a new speaker of the house, and new chairs of house and senate committees along with new committee members. All of these changes will affect agriculture from the production to the sale. Will we end up farming crops or carbon?

There will be different heads of departments regardless of the administration that is seated. Will those under Biden act differently than they did in the same positions under Obama? Many of the regulatory constraints removed under the Trump administration will return under a Biden administration. These rules and regulations created an unseen tax on producers. In addition, the China issue is one that is front and center and cannot be swept under the rug.

Another important issue is the Covid vaccine; both the speed with which the vaccinations take place and its impact on COVID. Will this allow people & families to return to enjoying activities in agritourism? As farmers plan their crop year, consider the following: It will be imperative that you continue to improve your plant. Be sure to reinvest, both with marketing and in the physical plant. The artificial reason behind the foot traffic isn't because you were a good salesman, but because of need and fear. The reality was minimal marketing could sell everything this year, and next year will not be the same. People that found success with local are going to need to continue to work to keep the customers they have gained. When stores open back up, where will those customers choose to go?

By the 4th quarter of 2021, we may be looking at a downturn. Caution should be taken in the 3rd quarter to conserve financial resources. Cost of inputs will rise and there will be very little increase in the value of your production. China is working to double their hog production by the end of 2021, with their need for corn causing its price to rise, putting pressure on profitability of animal protein in the US. Ethanol production is expected to increase by 5%, putting an additional pull on corn stocks/reserves. I believe we will continue to see depressed protein prices moving forward. Fuel costs will rise and tax cuts will disappear; taxes and fees will go up on both the National and local levels, removing discretionary income from people's pockets.

How long will it take people to go on cruises again, to go to Disney World and other travel destinations, and will this cut back on your foot traffic as discretionary spending for these larger purchases resumes?

Henry B. Wright III, President RIFB



Viewpoint: Focus on Agriculture

By Garrett Hawkins

My children get a little tired sometimes of me encouraging them to “think big and do good.” I was reminded recently that not all good deeds have to be big.

The book fair had been going on at Appleton City Elementary. Like you, I vividly remember begging my parents to take my brother, sister and me so that we could paw through stacks of books spread out on the cafeteria tables. My kids are no different, so my wife took the kids while I was out doing chores.

Our middle son, Colton, insisted on bringing his wallet containing birthday money he had saved. I was a bit surprised as I had figured we would be venturing to Bass Pro or Cabela’s over the holidays so he could spend his cash on hunting gear. One by one, he selected six books and did the math in his head to figure out he had reached his limit.

The school librarian added up the books, and Colton handed her his money. It was then that he shared with his mother he wanted to give the books to his teacher to use in the classroom. Jennifer, with tears in her eyes, walked him down the hallway, books in hand, to find his teacher.

At home that evening, Jennifer recounted what Colton had done, and all I could do was smile. I gave him a big hug and told him I was proud of him. It was a moment I will never forget.

I share this story not to boast, but as a reminder that acts of kindness, regardless of how big or small, can make a difference. In this instance, one third-grade classroom has six more books for young minds to read.

This year has been incredibly difficult for our communities. Many families have been forced into figuring out how to do school at home. Likewise, plenty of parents have adjusted their commute to a walk to the dining room table. We have all experienced the pain of losing in-person interactions with friends and family or the fulfillment we find in church and sports.

As 2020 comes to an end, our friends and neighbors need encouragement more than I can ever remember. Join me in “thinking big (or small) and doing good” this holiday season and let’s count our blessings together.

Garrett Hawkins is a farmer and president of Missouri Farm Bureau. This column was originally published by Missouri Farm Bureau.

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Thank a farmer 3 times a day!

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Just a reminder that all 4-H and FFA Members can join RI Farm Bureau for free, and receive all the benefits our other members receive including discounts at thousands of businesses nationwide.

Our 4-H and FFA Members are the future of agriculture and we encourage you to join, either online at RIFB.org, or by calling the office at 401-385-3339.

