

# Farmstead Times

## from the Rhode Island Farm Bureau



**The RI Farm Bureau Annual Meeting has been moved to the FIRST Thursday in November. Please see the Save the Date on page 7!**

**Volume 25, Issue 3**

**Summer 2024**

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The 2024 legislative session ended in the early morning hours of Friday, June 14, 2024. RIFB tracked over 123 bills this year, here is a rundown on some of our higher priorities.

To our great disappointment, no money was allocated for Farmland Preservation or Open Space in the Green Bond in the Governor's Budget for fiscal year 2025. H 7550 and S 2336 were introduced adding 4 proposals totaling \$16 million to the Green Bonds for Farmland, Open Space, and Forests and Habitat Management. The state budget passed with \$13 million of these proposals intact.

S 2335 and H7684 sought to define Urban Ag and Small Farms, exempting both from property tax and from the requirement to file an IRS 1040 Schedule F to receive a Farm Tax Exempt Certificate. RIFB agrees that a farmer should not be defined by their tax status and met with the sponsors of both bills to discuss amendments to define farms by activity and not only size, and to provide equal exemptions to all sizes of farms. These bills were Held for Further Study (HFS) and we plan to continue working with the sponsors for 2025.

RI Farm Bureau worked with Representative Cotter to introduce legislation that would remove the tax-based definition of farmer from wetlands regs and put the setback relief on "agricultural land". With no definition of Farmer in RIGL except for in the Wetlands Act in Title 2, this tax-based definition is used in many other areas such as town regs to define "farmer" in Rhode Island. While held for further study this session, we will be working with RIDEM this fall to have mutually agreeable language for a January 2025 bill introduction.

Passing this session were S 2297 and H 7562, companion bills which moved the promulgation of the list of furbearers to be under the purview of RIDEM Fish and Wildlife. This delegates the responsibility of listing furbearing animals to the DEM, rather than having them enumerated in the statute.

Also passing was legislation to give Rhode Island's only commercial poultry farm, Little Rhody Farms, an additional four years to convert their poultry operation to a cage-free operation. A confinement bill passed in 2018 previously gave the farm until July 1, 2026, to comply but concerns over avian influenza have made it too difficult to get necessary financing for the retrofit. The new exemption expires January 1, 2030.

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This year's legislation included two bills to legalize the sale of raw milk. As we have each year that the bills have appeared, Rhode Island Farm Bureau opposed both.

We understand that there are outside influences that may make raw milk sound appealing to some consumers, but is it really raw milk that people enjoy, or the fact that raw milk is whole milk? Whole milk has a federal requirement to be a minimum of 3.25% butterfat. That's right, whole milk is really just 3.25% fat. Most people drink 1% or 2% milk, and some even drink skim milk. Let's be honest, anything less than whole milk isn't going to have the same taste and satisfaction. The reality about milkfat is that in today's dairy world, there are many breeds that naturally produce a higher milk fat percentage. Jerseys, Guernseys, and Ayrshires naturally produce milk with butterfat ranging from 4 to 5% or even more. Even Holstein herds now hover around 4% butterfat. Commercial dairies remove all the cream from milk, and put back in the amount required to make 1 %, 2% or whole milk. All raw milk is going to have a higher butterfat % than the milk you find in the dairy case. Luckily, in RI we have Wright's Dairy Farm which bottles its own milk in North Smithfield, offering a large selection of milks, including Cream Top milk. Wright's whole milk is just that: the milk as it comes from their cows, just across the driveway, via a stainless pipeline. Wright's whole milk has no cream removed before processing, and so naturally has a butterfat of over 4%, approximately 30% more butterfat than commercial standards require. In Tiverton, Arruda's Dairy Farm also offers a number of varieties of their own milk, bottled at their dairy just across the road from their dairy farm. In addition, as noted with Wright's, many small creameries around southern New England offer creamline, or cream top, milk. Creamline milk is pasteurized but non-homogenized. This means the milk is less processed and closer to its natural form, leaving the natural amount of butterfat that the cow produces in the milk. This is the closest to raw milk that can be sold in Rhode Island.

***It is clear that Rhode Island Farm Bureau supports dairy farms, so why don't we support the sale of raw milk? The simple answer is that there is too much risk associated with raw milk.***

This year, with the spread of H5N1 to dairy cattle in at least 12 states, we now know that Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza can be spread to those drinking raw milk. In early June, RI Farm Bureau participated in a couple of webinars on HPAI H5N1. During the presentations, USDA APHIS Veterinary Services and Cornell University confirmed studies show pasteurized milk and dairy products are safe, however raw milk consumption remains a risk for multiple diseases and should not be consumed. For large farms, it is actually an industry standard for calves to be fed milk replacer or pasteurized milk to eliminate disease-causing bacteria. As expected, studies also confirmed cooking hamburger products to recommended temperature inactivates the virus.

The cleanliness of a dairy and its animals does not guarantee the safety of its raw milk. Even dairy farms with very good sanitation practices can be affected. Healthy animals can carry illness-causing germs, such as Brucella, Campylobacter, Cryptosporidium, E. coli, Listeria, and Salmonella, that can contaminate milk. Even if tests on a batch of a farm's raw milk come back negative, it is no guarantee that the next batch of milk will be free of harmful germs. Licensed dairy farms in Rhode Island are not allowed to sell raw milk, it is not legal.

RI Farm Bureau would be willing to consider supporting sales of raw milk at such time that the RI Dept of Health sets up an inspection program for raw milk, in addition to TB and Brucellosis testing for dairy cows, and that the equipment used at the farm is tested using the same guidelines any licensed RI milk producer shipping raw milk to a licensed producer must follow.

RI Farm Bureau also supports small-scale pasteurization for small farms that wish to sell their own milk from the farm. State-level grants to support these small dairy farms' efforts would be welcome to help the process.

# FFA State Officer Spotlight



RI State Officers use  
RI Farm Bureau  
office space for Base  
Camp Training

## 2024-2025 State FFA Officers:

**Paige Reynolds**, a Junior at Ponaganset High School, is most excited to kick off her year as State President with her new officer team. Paige is looking forward to spending the summer traveling to various leadership workshops to help the officer team learn and grow together. This year, Paige's SAE project was organizing Meals of Hope in her school district to help fight hunger in her community.

**Bryan Jones** is a Senior at Exeter-West Greenwich High School and is serving as State Vice President. Bryan's SAE this year was Agricultural Education with a focus of networking with Ag students around the state. Being the State Vice President this year he is looking forward to expanding his network across the country.

**Olivia Myers**, a Junior at Narragansett High School is serving as the State Secretary. Olivia has been involved in the Dairy Industry her whole life and loves to learn more about her passion through her SAE project each year. Olivia is most excited to create memories with her fellow officers this year.

**Emma Roeben**, a Junior at Narragansett High School is this year's state Reporter. Emma is most excited to get to meet State Officers from across the country and see how diverse Agriculture is around the United States. Emma is passionate about dairy management and continues to learn more through her SAE project each year.

**Abbie Smith** is the State Sentinel from the Narragansett Chapter. Abbie's SAE project has been about greenhouse sustainability and efficiency. Abbie looks forward to helping create a community throughout all the Chapters in Rhode Island.

Paige, Bryan, Olivia, Emma, and Abbie are all incredibly dedicated and passionate about their roles within their State FFA Officer positions! It's inspiring to see young leaders like them making a difference in their communities and the agricultural industry. Their commitment to service through projects like Meals of Hope and greenhouse sustainability is commendable. Wishing them all the best as they embark on their journey as state officers and continue to grow and learn together!

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Having a strong relationship with the Rhode Island Farm Bureau over the years has given American National the understanding of what truly matters most to farmers across the state.

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\*2022 SNL Market Share Data

21.188.25.410890.0424

## Proactively Protect What Matters Most

Your home is likely one of the biggest investments you will ever make. Protecting it – and the loved ones who call it home – should always be top of mind. Yet, every year, approximately 50,000 electrical fires start behind the walls of homes just like yours. Electrical fires are often caused by damaged wires or faulty appliances or devices. These hazards can be insidious and are often hidden from view inside the walls and can wreak havoc at any time. The results of electrical fires are devastating, and lead to more deaths, injuries, and damage than any other type of fire in the home.

What if there was a way to detect electrical hazards in your home before they lead to a devastating fire?

American National has partnered with property loss prevention service, Ting, to do just that. As part of an endorsement to the Special Farm Package 10, Ting is providing participants device that can detect early warning signs of electrical hazards before they can develop into a major fire and put your home and loved ones in danger.

“We’re excited to partner with Ting,” said Michael Derkowski, Senior Product Manager for American National. “Fires are devastating. Unseen hazards such as arcing can cause significant damage. Providing security has always been a mission of American National and this continues that legacy.”

Using a smart sensor that plugs into the wall and connects to your Wi-Fi, Ting monitors the electrical network in real-time and issues text and phone alerts to homeowners if an electrical hazard is detected. If necessary, a licensed electrician may be scheduled to visit the home to mitigate the hazard with a credit of up to \$1,000 to cover the cost of repairs. In addition, a credit will be applied to premiums to help offset the cost of the Ting service.

In addition to smart home monitors, other steps you can take to prevent home electrical fires are: inspect and upgrade. Approximately half of homes built before 1973 don’t have an updated electrical system. If you live in an older home, you may want to have your home inspected by a licensed electrician who can make recommendations to prevent an electrical fire. Your home electrical system isn’t the only thing that can become a hazard from years of use. Appliance cords and internal wiring can deteriorate from wear and tear, and lead to a fire. Consider upgrading old appliances.

When it comes to taking a proactive approach to your home safety, you don’t want to wait until it’s too late. Contact your American National agent or find one near you. <https://an.insure/findanagent>



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# Change of date for RIFB Annual Meeting

Thursday, November 7th, 2024  
Crystal Lake Golf Club, Mapleville, RI

## Tentative Agenda

Isabella Chism- AFBF Chair Women's Leadership Committee  
Austin Large- AFBF Small State Coordinator  
FSMA Final Water Rule Workshop with DEM  
(large grower compliance date is April 2025)



### We're there to keep you doing your job.

As a three-generation family-run business, I know first hand what it takes to keep a business going. When my father started Monroe Tractor in 1951, his philosophy was "if you take care of the customer, the business will grow" or as he often said, "where courtesy dwells, service excels." His words are still the foundation of how we do business today.

Every Monroe associate understands that when we help a customer with their equipment, we're also helping them do their jobs, earn a living and raise a family.

We are committed to providing the right product selection, quality service and support, and understanding the real needs of our customers to ensure that you're always up and running.

We are proud to be a part of the RI Farm Bureau and excited to bring the CASE brand back to New England and recently, CASE IH. Reach out to Mike Reagan with any of your equipment needs!

Best,

Janet Felosky, CEO



Mike Reagan – RI Equipment Sales

401-332-8062

# RI Farm Bureau Family Picnic

**SATURDAY, JULY 20TH**  
5:30pm at 2233 South County Trail East Greenwich

**\$25 PER  
TICKET**

**ALL AGES  
WELCOME**

Dinner is catered by South County BBQ  
Kids 10 and under FREE

Bring the whole family! Bring chairs and blankets for the  
movie night that will follow dinner

**Fundraiser for Young Ag Professional sponsored awards.  
Bring cash for all the raffle goodies!**

**For tickets: Stop by the RIFB office or  
EMMA Acres Farm Stand to purchase  
401-385-3339**

**Your ad could be here for just \$75/issue!**



Contact Heidi or Maggie at the RIFB Office to learn  
more about advertising opportunities in the quarterly  
newsletter. **401-385-3339**

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# The 2024 Rhode Island Farm Scavenger Hunt has started.

We have added some new farms for 2024!

Orchards may not be open quite yet, and please always check farms' social media or websites for any change in hours from the flier!

Stop by any participating farm to grab a map and get the hunt started!

Questions?

Call Heidi or Maggie at the RI Farm Bureau:  
401-385-3339 or email [rifarm@rifb.org](mailto:rifarm@rifb.org).



## BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP

Don't forget your membership benefits! You can easily save the cost of your dues by taking advantage of these discounts. Go to [rifb.org](http://rifb.org) for more info on:

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**Cruise Lines**

## Need to apply for or renew your pesticide license?

All pesticide exams are available online at this time except private applicator exams. Private Pesticide License exams are given in person by the Rhode Island Department of Agriculture. Exams are given by registration only and under RIDOH guidelines. Please contact Harold Puckett or Kimberly Lavoie to schedule a private license exam.

Commercial licensing exams are available online. The study material for the core exam is available for download on the RI DEM Pesticide Safety and IPM Training page. The category manuals are available for purchase online through the Cornell bookstore.

For more information please contact  
[Harold.Puckett@dem.ri.gov](mailto:Harold.Puckett@dem.ri.gov) or  
[Kimberly.Lavoie@dem.ri.gov](mailto:Kimberly.Lavoie@dem.ri.gov).

If you do not have Internet access, you may contact:  
Harold Puckett at DEM Ag 401-537-4284,  
Howard Cook at DEM Ag 401-537-4271, or  
Kimberly Lavoie at DEM Ag 401-537-4280.

## President's Corner

While we have been seeing what feels like plenty of rain, don't forget that we are in New England. The weather can change on a dime, and only time will tell. The long-range forecast shows us at best 50-50, trending towards perhaps drier than normal. Last week's weather allowed for a lot of first-cut hay to be harvested. This has been a fast season, and those who were unable to harvest may be able to take advantage of what looks to be good weather in the next week or so.

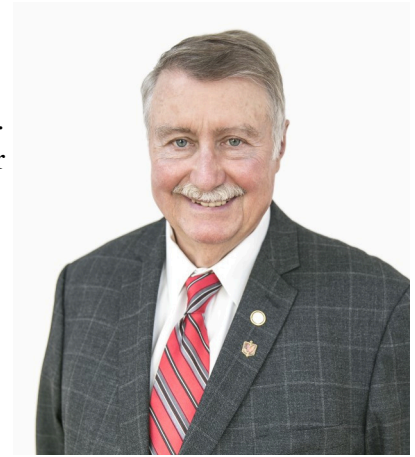
The trade deficit in Ag is upside down, and the deficit continues to increase. With all the trade deficits we have faced, Ag has always been the bright spot. As more fruits and vegetables are being imported due to lack of pickers in the U.S., it hurts us twice. At the national level, the trade deficit sends money offshore, and in RI it subjects our local producers to unfair competition in the local markets. Exports are also down, as we aren't exporting as much.

With China increasing their own domestic hog production, we are playing catch up as U.S. Exports of hogs and beef are increasing to Mexico where more than 75% of the country is experiencing drought, and more than half of Mexico is in severe to exceptional drought.

The draw for raw milk is the appeal to the consumer. Is this because it is raw, or because it is true whole milk? Although there is clamor for raw milk, perhaps what the consumer is really looking for is a higher quality of milk. That milk is already available, pasteurized, through local dairies. This helps local Rhode Island dairies such as Wright's Dairy Farm in Smithfield, and Arruda Dairy in Tiverton. Connecticut farms are supported through Munroe Dairy. Other small dairies in eastern CT and over the line in Massachusetts also sell their products in smaller RI farm stands and markets. For those seeking another alternative to commercially processed milk, creamline is non-homogenized, but pasteurized, resulting in the cream rising to the top. This is the closest to raw milk that can be sold in Rhode Island.

As a bright spot in tough times, it is projected that 50% less people will be going on extended vacations this year. This does not mean they are not vacationing; they are just keeping it local. It would behoove you to look toward agritourism on your farm to provide people with that local experience they may be looking for. Make your location a local destination for entertainment, cookout food, a family-friendly setting for people to experience a farm. Don't be afraid to look at new opportunities for your business; consider partnering with any farm or business that may compliment your own or fill a spot you don't provide.

We'd like to take a moment to thank all our Rhode Island Farm Bureau members. We are here to help you when you have difficulty with state and local regulations, are looking for resources, or seek advice. RI Farm Bureau is glad to do that, but now we are asking for your help with membership. Why is it important to have good/solid membership numbers? To continue with our daily work. To back RIFB up at the state house when we introduce, support, or oppose legislation. The Rhode Island Farm Bureau needs grass roots support for legislation to succeed, and sometimes support is needed to help prevent harmful legislation from passing. If each person reading this could bring in just one member, we could nearly double our membership.



*Henry B. Wright III, President RIFB*

# Focus on Agriculture: Sustainability: Myths vs. Facts

By Heather Lang, North Dakota Farm Bureau Federation

The story of the newly married couple and their dream of continuing the family farming legacy is a tale of determination and resilience in the face of challenges. With a deep-rooted belief in living off the land and improving it for future generations, they encountered obstacles such as limited land availability and the need to manage it for multiple family members. That couple is us. This is our story.

Soil is the foundation of productive, sustainable agriculture. Over 20 years ago, we implemented no-till practices to help improve the soil and reduce our fuel costs. We were cautioned against running cattle or other ruminant animals on the no-till fields to avoid compaction and the impact of their hooves. Our family farm was founded on cattle, specifically Simmental cattle, so they have been a major part of our 5th generation ranch.

Even though my husband and I don't own cattle, his brothers and father do, and we all operate off the same land. Cattle would be incorporated. With one of the brothers specializing in Ag Business Management and focusing on soil health, the brothers were determined to work together to increase soil health for generations. Implementing climate-resilient agricultural practices such as cover crops and rotational grazing gave us tremendous capacity to decrease emissions and sequester carbon dioxide in the soil. Integrating livestock with cover crops has been a major part of our long-term soil health success.

When it comes to agriculture's impact on our environment, there are often myths and misconceptions that can cloud the conversation. It can be frustrating when prominent figures highlight agriculture as a significant contributor to climate change. However, it's essential to approach this issue with an open mind and consider the facts.

**MYTH:** Agriculture is the leading cause of climate change.

**FACT:** Agriculture's contribution to climate change is minimal. Agricultural greenhouse gases come in at less than 10%, very modest compared to electricity, which is responsible for 25%, transportation at 28% and industrial sectors at 23%.

Agriculture can be a major part of the climate solution and, in the process, improve rural communities, the health of our soil and water, and the lives of those who work on farms and ranches.

**MYTH:** Soil has no role in climate change.

**FACT:** Soil has everything to do with the climate! At our farm, we not only monitor and manage the soil health closely, but we help increase the net carbon storage which increases the amount of photosynthesis. We plant hundreds of trees each year, use cover crops and practice no-till conservation tillage practices. Studies have shown that fields managed using no-till for multiple years generally have a higher water-holding capacity, reduce soil erosion, increase soil biological activity and increase soil organic matter.

Agriculture is unique among sectors in its ability not just to decrease its climate impact, but also to sequester carbon to help the climate footprint of other sectors as well.

*Heather Lang is a family farmer in North Dakota with local, state and national Farm Bureau leadership experience. She currently serves as president of her county Farm Bureau (Burleigh). Follow her on Instagram ([ndpiggytales](#)) to learn more about her journey. This column was originally published on North Dakota Farm Bureau's "[On Your Table](#)" blog.*

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## RI Farm Bureau

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16 B Nooseneck Hill Rd  
West Greenwich, RI 02817

Phone: 401-385-3339

Fax: 401-385-3394

E-mail: [rifarm@rifb.org](mailto:rifarm@rifb.org)

Web: [www.rifb.org](http://www.rifb.org)



*Thank a farmer 3 times a day!*

## CALLING ALL FFA AND 4-H MEMBERS!



### JOIN RI FARM BUREAU FOR FREE

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](http://RIFB.org), or by calling the office at 401-385-3339.

