

# West Virginia Department of Agriculture

Walt Helmick, Commissioner



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### STATE FFA HAM, BACON AND EGG SHOW AND SALE SET FOR MONDAY EVENING

**Charleston, W.Va.** – The Annual State FFA Ham, Bacon and Egg Show and Sale will be held Monday, March 14, 2016 at 7 p.m. in Building 7 (State Training Center) of the Capitol Complex.

The auction will feature the top 50 hams, 50 bacons and 10 dozens of eggs produced by students from schools throughout West Virginia.

Proceeds of each sale go directly to students, who typically roll the profits back into next year's project, or apply it to their college tuition. Individual county sales are also conducted, and West Virginia is one of the few states where this type of event still occurs.

"This program is a superb educational tool," said Commissioner of Agriculture Walt Helmick. "Students begin by learning to responsibly take care of an animal, and then they learn the skills to use that animal for food. We have been working to encourage these young people to consider becoming full-time farmers because the opportunity is there for them right now to be successful in this profession."

Membership in West Virginia FFA is on the rise with 5,091 young men and women in 67 high school and nine middle school chapters. HBE projects are a popular type of Supervised Agriculture Experience (SAE). Every student enrolled in an agricultural concentration in school is required to develop an SAE, which provides students an opportunity to apply knowledge and skills gained in the classroom to real-life work experiences. Students and teachers often work throughout the summer months on SAE projects, exhibiting an uncommon dedication to educational activities.

FFA Ham, Bacon and Egg Sales have been an annual tradition in West Virginia for decades. The sale was first observed in 1941, but some years were skipped during World War II.

All hams and bacons are processed in state-of-the-art facilities that meet commercial kitchen standards. For example, processing facilities must have sanitary walls that are impervious to liquids and can easily be cleaned, floors must be sloped to drains and work areas must be able to stand up to the salts used in cure mixtures. Hand-washing sinks must be foot, knee or elbow-operated and students must have a dress-in/dress-out room where they can change into clean clothes when entering the facilities.

The facilities must also keep daily temperature logs which ensure that hams and bacons are being cured at the correct temperature. Curing at either too high or too low a temperature affects the quality of the cure. Hams are also tested for proper salt content and shrinkage prior to auction. Removing the proper amount of moisture from hams is another critical component to achieving an optimum cure.

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