

**News Release**  
**5-23-14**

**WEST VIRGINIA GROWN BERRIES SELL WELL AT 73RD STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL**

West Virginia Grown strawberries made a commercial comeback at the 2014 West Virginia Strawberry Festival. Nearly \$1,000 worth of berries were sold over two days, thanks to the efforts of the West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA), the Festival Board, the City of Buckhannon and Upshur County FFA.

“It was difficult getting berries lined up, as I expected,” said WVDA sale coordinator Buddy Davidson. “The festival is scheduled a bit early in the growing season, and some of the growers had issues with blight and, of course, deer - which are an enormous problem for farmers and gardeners throughout the state.”

Davidson said he thinks the concept can be expanded next year to include other retail locations throughout the city. Eventually, he would like to see the strawberry shortcake sales held by numerous church and civic group source their berries from West Virginia growers.

“I think we’ve proven that fresh, local berries are a far superior product to what festival-goers are accustomed to, and that buyers are willing to pay a premium in that environment. We have a receptive customer base, a built-in sales force in the FFA chapter that can use the opportunity as a fund-raiser, and we have the capability to grow the berries,” he said.

Historically, area growers provided all the berries eaten at the festival, and shipped a surplus to out-of-state markets.

He noted that approximately 200 pints of berries were sold over two days in one location for \$5 a pint.

“I think that’s a price that should entice growers to get involved next year,” he said.

Email Beth Southern, [bsouthern@wvda.us](mailto:bsouthern@wvda.us) for photos

*The West Virginia Department of Agriculture protects plant, animal and human health through a variety of scientific, regulatory and consumer protection programs, as mandated by state law. The Commissioner of Agriculture is one of six statewide elected officials in West Virginia. For more information, visit [www.wvagriculture.org](http://www.wvagriculture.org).*