Kent’s Reflections

Agriculture is vital to our state – physically and economically

Recently, I had the privilege of being the keynote speaker for the West Virginia University Community Leadership Academy and then a panelist for a breakout session on public health policy. My speech highlighted the importance of community development and collaboration between public and private entities. The goal was to highlight how vital a robust agriculture community is to our state’s health, both financially and physically. From helping spur economic development, to increasing access to more fresh, local and healthier foods, agriculture is vital to our state’s future.

That speech led nicely into the panel discussion on public health policy. The West Virginia Department of Agriculture is partnering with WVU to study the benefits and expansion of “farmacies.” The concept of farmacies is to replace standard medication with healthy foods as the prescription for many of our common ailments. This is based on the early success of a prescription community supported agriculture program started by Grow Ohio Valley. Watch for more news on this as we move forward with this exciting work. We can and will do more to improve our local communities and the lives of all West Virginians.

What was great about the Community Leadership Academy was the ability to talk with individuals who are committed to helping West Virginia. As members of my staff and I travel the state, we learn every day about other groups and organizations who are committed to a better West Virginia. The newly formed WVDA Agriculture Business Development Division will help facilitate discussion and build on partnerships to achieve our part of this commitment. As we see in the current budget crisis, we must eliminate the duplication of services to increase our access to more fresh, local and healthier foods, agriculture is vital to our state’s future.

High on Flat Mountain, just outside of Alderson, you’ll find Sunset Berry Farm and Produce. The view is spectacular. Monroe County unfolds in the distance. But this time of year, the best view is inside Kent and Jennifer Gilkerson’s high tunnels. They’re filled with white strawberry blossoms and berries just beginning to ripen.

“My family’s grown strawberries for several generations,” explained Kent. “My great-uncle grew them back in the 1940’s and 1950’s. My father grew them when I was a kid growing up in Fayette County. When Jennifer and I bought this place in 2009, we needed something to grow, and we started growing strawberries.”

The couple learned quickly it wasn’t as easy as putting the plants in the ground. “The soil wasn’t great to grow strawberries. Our pH was about 4.5, very acidic. We’ve had to add a lot of nutrients. We’re at a 6.5 to 7 pH now and the strawberries seem to love it,” said Kent.

Strawberries are a big business for the small farm. With more than 23,300 plants in the ground and another 20,000 set to go in this summer and fall, things are going to get even busier.

“Strawberries are labor intensive, but it’s nice to grow a product you pretty much know is going to sell out.”

The farm’s strawberries are a favorite with locals. “We sell a lot of Farm 2 School strawberries. The schools will pretty much take as many as we can get to them. We sell at farmers’ markets. People hear about us through word of mouth,” explained Kent. “We’ve even started working with schools and churches on fundraisers. A lot of our berries are pre-sold before they even start to get ripe.”

The berry business is good but don’t think for a second it’s easy, said Jennifer. “It’s all bend-over, back-breaking work. Kent and I will pick for hours at a time. The berries don’t wait. When they’re ripe, it’s picking time.”

Not only do they pick the berries themselves, they’re constantly on the lookout for four-legged creatures who like to dine for free. “A couple years ago we lost 3,000 plants in the field to deer,” said Kent. “You baby these plants all year and then a couple nights and they’re wiped out.”

A couple of the pest are spider mites. “I’d never heard of them until they ruined a couple thousand plants. Instead of insecticides, we found introducing a predatory mite takes care of the problem.”

The Gilkerson’s still consider themselves beginners. They’re trying different growing techniques to see which ones work best. This season, two fields are filled with strawberry plants as well as two high tunnels, one with a ground covering, the other without.

Berries, continued on page 2
Berries, continued from page 1

The couple stressed the high tunnel harvest is a lot easier. “The high tunnel berries ripen a couple weeks earlier. You can get your berries to market earlier and the berries themselves look so much cleaner because they’re not getting rained on,” stressed Jennifer. “You don’t have to worry so much about the elements. There’s not the deer pressure. High tunnels are a really good environment to grow strawberries.”

The high tunnel berries will be ready for harvest in the first couple weeks of May. Those in the field will be ready in middle to late May, just in time for the Alderson Strawberry Festival. They’ll supply berries to several farmers and the Gilkerson’s are confident the customers won’t be disappointed

So what is the difference between a WV-grown berry like the ones from Sunset Berry Farm and ones you buy in the grocery store? A lot according to Kent. “Our strawberries have a much sweeter, juicier taste. They’re picked at peak ripeness and delivered right away to customers. The strawberries picked in Florida or California might be just as good if you could eat them right then and there in the field. However, they pick the berries when they’re half ripe and ship them 3,000 miles across the country. Strawberries don’t get any sweeter than the day they were picked. However, they will continue to turn red. So when you get them in the store, the berry looks nice and ripe and red, but the sweetness just isn’t there.”

This season the Gilkerson’s are trying something new. They’re opening Sunset Berry Farm as a u-pick. “I had a co-worker bring his two little girls out here to pick strawberries last year. He sat his 3-year-old in the back of his truck next to a bucket of strawberries they’d just picked. She was just chucking them in her mouth one after the other smiling the whole time,” said Kent. “It’s a lot of fun to watch and very rewarding seeing someone enjoy your berries right in front of you.”

For more information on u-pick hours, contact Sunset Berry Farm at 304-646-3784 or www.facebook.com/sunsetberryfarm. Check out the WVDA You Tube channel (WV Department of Agriculture) for a tutorial from Kent on how to properly plant strawberries.

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Ag Briefs

- **WVDA offering free introduction to gardening class**
  The West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA) is pleased to announce an ‘Intro to Gardening’ class for beginner to intermediate gardeners. The class is set for May 19, 9 a.m. at the Gus R. Douglass Agriculture Center, 217 Gus R. Douglass Lane, Charleston, WV 25312. Kanawha County native and master gardener Martha Ferrell will instruct the class which is open to the public and free to attend. The class will cover soil preparation, growing and transplanting seedlings and maintaining the garden until harvest. During the class, attendants will be given seedlings to start and then take home and transplant later.
  
  If you are interested in attending or want to learn more about this project, please contact Taylor Ferrell ferrell@wvda.us (304-357-5121).

- **WVDA ’Women in Agriculture’ program accepting nominations**
  The West Virginia Department of Agriculture is seeking nominations for the 2017 “West Virginia Women in Agriculture” program. 
  
  Nominations are due by June 1. Those making the nominations are asked to provide as much detail about the nominee’s agricultural career as possible.
  
  Induction is granted to those women who have made significant contributions to the establishment, development, advancement or improvement of West Virginia agriculture, forestry or specialty crops in the Mountain State. An inductee reception will be held at the 2017 State Fair of West Virginia.
  
  Visit http://bit.ly/2nQQPGJ to complete an application. For more information, please contact Cindy Shreve at 304-639-2397.

- **West Virginia to participate in National Maple Syrup Survey for second year**
  West Virginia maple syrup producers should keep an eye on their mailboxes for a survey from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) that will inform state and federal agricultural officials about production trends, and how effectively government promotional programs are impacting the industry. The survey will be conducted April 28 through May 15, 2017. West Virginia’s inclusion in the national survey is notable because production in previous years was not considered sufficient to merit measuring. Producers who are included in the sample will receive a survey in the mail and may choose to respond by mail, or over the Internet. They may also be contacted by a field enumerator for information about their operation. The results of the maple syrup survey will be released in the Crop Production Report June 9, 2017 at noon. Visit https://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/West_Virginia/ for survey results. For more information, contact the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) West Virginia Field Office at 1-800-535-7088.

- **Hancock County Designated as a Contiguous Drought Area**
  The USDA designated Hancock County as a contiguous disaster area due to a drought that occurred in 14 counties in Pennsylvania between May and December of 2016. The designation makes Farm Service Agency (FSA) emergency production loss assistance available for these farmers in Hancock County who suffered qualifying losses pursuant to section 321(a) of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act.

Farmers who meet the eligibility requirements have eight months from the date of declaration (April 5, 2017) to apply for loans to help cover part of their actual losses. The FSA will consider each loan application on its own merit. The FSA also has a variety of programs in addition to the loan program to assist eligible farmers recover from adversity. Interested farmers may contact their local USDA service centers for further information on eligibility requirements and application procedures for these programs. Additional information is available online at http://disaster.fsa.usda.gov.

Kent’s Reflections, continued

We must all pull together, like a good team of horses. After meeting so many fantastic people, I am confident and have high hopes for West Virginia and agriculture in general.

Speaking of the budget, it is disappointing that there is no FY18 budget as this column goes to print. The Governor and the Legislature have recognized the importance of the WVDA in our state’s economy, food safety and animal health. They must be applauded for that. The hope is they can find a compromise that keeps essential services intact, reduces the size of our government and does not put any more burdens on the working people of West Virginia.

One last thing that needs to be highlighted this month is the work of the Wisconsin Legislature. The Badger State is looking to join a national movement to help our veterans through agriculture. Their legislators looked to West Virginia and our department of agriculture when crafting their Veterans to Agriculture legislation. Once again, collaborative efforts with other organizations such as the USDA-NRCS, the Farmers Veterans Coalition and the WV National Guard are starting to pay dividends. West Virginia stepped up to the challenge and is now leading the charge to help our veterans. We should all be proud of that.

Until next month, my department will continue to travel the state promoting the best of what West Virginia has to offer. I personally hope to meet as many of you as I can during my travels. I want to hear your thoughts and ideas on how to help our great state.

Semper Fi,
High school rodeo event draws competitors from seven states to Winfield Riding Club

Students from seven states packed the Winfield Riding Club for the “Mountaineer Stampede” youth rodeo March 31-April 2.

The event included 180 individual competitors from grade school to high school competing simultaneously in two arenas. Besides West Virginia, participants came from Ohio, Kentucky, Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina and Michigan.

The schedule included a full slate of rodeo events, including team roping and bull riding. The Fellowship of Christian Athletes led a “Cowboy Church” on Sunday morning.

“These kids are competing for championship buckles and points to qualify to go to the national championships in Gillette, Wy., or the junior high [championships] in Lebanon, Tenn.,” said Stampede Event Director Steve Asbury.

“Mostly kids don’t get the chance to compete against other states. It gives them a chance to find out ... where they stand against the other states. There’s a whole bunch of kids here that will be going to nationals. I can guarantee you I know of at least three kids that are going to college next year for rodeo,” he said, pointing out that the current breakaway roping national champ was involved in the Winfield competition.

He also noted that there are about 250 schools throughout the country with rodeo programs and that the national high school rodeo finals is the biggest single rodeo in the world with over 1,500 competitors.

Commissioner of Agriculture Kent Leonhardt addressed the youngsters during the contestants’ meeting Friday evening.

“The high school rodeo association is another great venue where our youth can enter agriculture,” he said. “It’s the fourth year for that event ... it’s been very well attended and the contestants are enthusiastic.”

One of those contestants, an alumnus actually, is Emily Parent. Her mom is the rodeo secretary, her dad is the rodeo vice president and her sister is a contestant this year.

“Ever since I’ve been in rodeo, it has taught me a tremendous amount about agriculture. It’s given me a much greater discipline and I’ve learned so much responsibility,” said Parent, who grew up on a farm and has been riding since she was about two years old. She began barrel racing at around age 11 and is currently studying agriculture education at Potomac State University.

The event is also an economic driver for Winfield.

“You’ve got all these people coming here to compete,” said Asbury. “They have to eat, they have to buy fuel. The hotels up the road are pretty much full. As you can see, our parking lot is packed with trailers.”

Proceeds from this rodeo are going to the barn-building fund at Camp Virgil Tate in Kanawha County to construct a state-of-the-art horse facility that will encourage even more ag-related events.

Commissioner Leonhardt greeted organizers prior to the Mountaineer Stampede school rodeo. The event was held March 31 - April 2 at Winfield Riding Club and had 180 competitors.
Thank you for your recipe submissions!

A few months ago, we requested to hear from you about your favorite recipes. Since then, we have received many recipes, some with great stories attached and all that sound delicious! We appreciate your time in submitting these and hope you enjoy seeing them printed in *The Market Bulletin*. Submissions are still open; if interested, please mail to: The Market Bulletin - Recipe Submission, 1900 Kanawha Blvd., E., Charleston, WV 25305. We look forward to hearing from you!

### Corn Pone (Bread)

**The night before baking:** Combine 4 cups white corn meal (plain), 4 cups boiling water, 1 cup sugar and 1 tablespoon salt. MIX WELL; cover and let sit overnight at room temperature.

**Next Morning Add:**
- 1 cup plain flour
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 1 egg (slightly beaten)
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda (dissolved in about 2 tablespoons water)
- 2 tablespoons melted butter

Mix all second-day ingredients well. Pour into a greased heavy Dutch oven. (use one with a lid). Bake in a preheated 450°F oven uncovered for 15 minutes. Reduce heat to 350°F; cover and continue baking for 45 minutes. Put lid in oven at the same time as the pone so the lid will be hot and not slow the baking. When pone is taken from the oven, let it stand for about 1 hour with lid on before cutting. After pone is removed from oven, water will form on underside of lid. Lift the lid very carefully and drain the water off. Dry with paper towel and replace lid.

Do this 2 or 3 times while pone is setting. If you cut pone as soon as it is baked, it will fall apart. Keep any leftovers in refrigerator!

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### Nancy Ballard of Greenville, WV writes:

My dear friend Hattie Mann gave me this recipe (below). She is no longer with us. About 5 years ago I shared the recipe with a mother wanting to make some money to send her daughter on a missionary trip. She used pie filling and

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### Thelma’s Macaroni Salad

1 8-ounce box elbow macaroni, cooked according to directions (if you can’t find an 8-ounce box, use 12-ounce box).

Pour macaroni into colander and hold under cold water until macaroni is cooled. Drain; add 1 large or 2 medium tomatoes (chopped), 1 cucumber (cut into small 1” pieces), ¼ green pepper (chopped), ½ medium onion (chopped), 1 stalk celery (sliced thin), 1 carrot (shredded), 2 or 3 chopped radishes, ½ cup shredded cheddar cheese; ½ cup chopped sweet pickle, 1 teaspoon celery seed, 1 cup Miracle Whip salad dressing and ½ cup sweet pickle vinegar.

Mix well and refrigerate several hours.

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### Chow Chow

1 gallon cabbage, chopped
12 onions
12 green peppers (sweet)
12 red peppers (sweet)
2 quarts chopped green tomatoes
½ cup salt

Chop onions, sweet peppers, cabbage and tomatoes. Mix all together with ½ cup salt. Let stand overnight or 7-8 hours. Drain; add sugar, spices and vinegar. Simmer 2 minutes or until tender. Put in pint or quart jars; seal. Makes 12 pints.

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### Granny Mann’s Filled Cookies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 cup granulated sugar</th>
<th>3 eggs</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 cup brown sugar</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 cup butter or Crisco</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 cups flour, sifted</td>
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<tr>
<td>¾ teaspoon nutmeg</td>
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<td>2 tablespoons buttermilk</td>
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<td>2 teaspoons vanilla</td>
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<td>1 teaspoon baking powder</td>
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<td>1 teaspoon baking soda</td>
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<td>½ teaspoon salt</td>
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Mix sugar, flour, salt and baking powder and nutmeg thoroughly. Add butter, milk. Beat eggs, adding vanilla and baking soda dissolved in buttermilk – use more flour if needed to make dough stiff. Use two pieces for each one finished cookie.

**Filling:** Cook until stiff enough not to run. Use 1 teaspoon for each cookie.

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### Special Oven-Baked Pancakes

½ stick butter or margarine
2 eggs
½ cup flour
½ cup milk

Use a large cast-iron pan or Corningware. Heat butter in pan. In meantime, slightly beat eggs, add flour, milk, nutmeg and salt to taste. Pour into pan, then put into oven. Bake at 475°F for 15-20 minutes. Dough will rise up. Before serving sprinkle with powdered sugar and lemon juice! Serves 2.

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### Interested in placing your free advertisement in *The Market Bulletin*?

The quickest and most efficient way is to email the ad to marketbulletin@wvda.us. Name, address and price required.

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### State Apiarist Wade Stiltner teaching the basics of beekeeping at the WV Urban Ag Conference April 28.

Have a beekeeping question, contact 304-558-2212.
For Your Good Health

In last month’s For Your Good Health we talked about the simple lifestyle choices people make that influence their long-term health. What we consume is a key aspect of health. Food and water is central to what we consume. They are basic, common elements we all require to survive. They are truly the great equalizer; regardless of how rich or poor we are, all bodies require nourishment and hydration. Fresh food with minimal to no processing does the most to maintain our health as they retain vitamin and mineral content. Processed foods typically have sodium and other preservatives added.

Unfortunately, in a number of areas of West Virginia we have “food deserts.” The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines a “food desert” as areas in the country where people don’t have access to fresh produce and other whole, healthy foods. Why are the people of WV living in different levels which purports you cannot climb up to the next level of psychological health until needs on the lower levels are met. The top level he calls “self-actualization” which basically means you are living your life to the fullest potential. The first level to meet are “physiological needs”. As you would imagine, food and water are part of that base level.

So for the more than 300 census tracts in WV that are “food deserts”, what can we do to help address this MINIMAL physical and psychological health issue? We need community advocacy linked to community health. Public health is certainly central to engage as access to fresh food is the foundation of good community health.

Creating access to fresh foods grown in WV from our local farmers at a location such as this is something to consider.

Health, cont. on page 6
Cattle Sales

Charlises 2-yr. heifers: 7, w/calves on ground, 5, 1.100 lbs. ea., 1,100.00/lb., 4, $1,500/ea.; 5, $1,400/ea.; 4, $1,800/ea.; 2, $2,000/ea.; 1, $2,100/ea.; D. Vicari, 25537; 762-2565.


Reg. Limousin 13-mo. bulls, $1,800; $2,000. Ronald Mann, 597-9634.

Reg. Angus 15-mo. bulls, Connealy Finale, 9, $1,800/ea.; 2, $2,000/ea.; 1, $2,500/ea.; 1, $4,000; 2, $8,000. Craig Williams, 597-9634.

Reg. Angus 18-mo. bulls, $1,800; 1, 12-mo. bull, $1,500, 2, $1,000. Howard Clark, 655-3595.

Reg. Angus 18-mo. bull, bred to O.K. Beefalo, $1,500; 8, $2,000/ea. Leonard Vanzandt, 557-5905.

Reg. Angus 18-mo. bull, bred to reg. Lim, $2,000; 1, 12-mo. bull, $1,500. Leonard Vanzandt, 557-5905.

Reg. Angus 2-yr. bull, bred to reg. Lim, $2,500; 1, 12-mo. bull, $1,500. Leonard Vanzandt, 557-5905.

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Reg. Angus 2-yr. bull, bred to reg. Lim, $2,500; 1, 12-mo. bull, $1,500. Leonard Vanzandt, 557-5905.
Cross market lambs, $300. John Wlkr. broodmares: blue roan & 2, Suffolk yrlg. rams, $350/up; market calfs $250-$300. Some dry feed & grass seed boxes, 1, conventional, shed kept, good cond., plate type spreader, usable, sm. size, 2-25 lbs. Willow Lane, Lost Creek, 26385; 709-3590.


Horse Wants

Miniature jack donkey. Rodger Channel, 674 Channels Mill Rd., Kerens, 26276; 478-0950.

For Sale

Plants

White Mulberry seedlings, 18”-30” tall, reasonably priced. Cathy Maynard, 163 Ritter Woods., Huntington, 25701; 724-711-0511.

Miscellaneous Sales

No riding habits or other clothes; appliances or furniture; antiques or crafts; hand power tools or equipment; food processing or preservation items or equipment; general wood working tools; firewood. Only dogs recognized by the AKC as herding or working can be accepted.


Trailer, Moritz, 16”, stock, 7’ tail, 6’wide, garage kept, bumper pull, 6 lug wheels, new heavy duty tires. John H. Keifer, P.O. Box 249, Christiansburg, VA 24073; 726-2699.

DAMIANI WANTED: any breed that is too sm. for a breeding herd. Sam & Barbara Tinsburg, 25405; 263-5031.
2017 Envirothon Winners
The West Virginia Envirothon is a conservation education program and competition for students in grades 9 through 12. The Envirothon focuses on five subject areas: aquatics, forestry, soils, wildlife, and a current environmental topic. By participating in the Envirothon program, students learn about West Virginia’s diverse ecosystem and how they can help conserve and protect it for future generations. The 2017 Envirothon was held at Jackson’s Mill in Weston with 26 teams competing. For a complete list of winners and more information on the Envirothon, visit www.wvca.us.

ANNUAL SPRING CLINIC & GARDEN FAIR
May 13, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
Harrison Co. Park, 4-H Center
Clarksburg, WV
Carla Kesling, 622-5982, ckesling@maur.com

Hay, fresh cut, 4x5 rolls, $35/bale; sq. bales, $3.50/bale.
Ray Blake, 1400 Johnson Ave., Ste. 1A, Bridgeport, 26330; 842-2765.

Slaughterhouse it has 2 cinder block bldgs, w/1/4 acre. Land, located in Hugh斯顿, 30 minutes from Charleston, $130,000. Patti Bolley, 119 Forest Ave., South Charleston, 25303; 767-4466.

Great Pyrenees 4/17 pups, both parents are working farm dogs, father is 100% Pyrenees, mother is 7/8 Pyrenees & 1/8 Boley, 119 Forest Ave., South Charleston, 25030; 767-4466.

Fun Farm Fact: A honeybee visits 50 to 100 flowers during a collection trip. Cut the commute – plant a flower garden!

Hay, 4x5, round bales, barn kept, never wet, $25/bale, will load. Dominick Ricottilli, 132 Hidden Hollow Rd., Belington, 26250; 823-1157.

Hay, 4x5, round bales, shed kept, never wet, $30/bale. James Robinson, 2374 Sycamore Rd., Clarksburg, 26301; 624-4790.

Sorghum pan, galvanized, pop wood sides, exc. cond., $300. Bill Schoolcraft, 5 Reynolds Ave., Elkview, 25501; 380-2776.

Hay, 4, round bales, shed kept, never wet, $30/bale. Steve Stephenson, 134 Dogwood Lane, Keslers Cross Lanes, 26675; 619-8454.

AKC German Shep, 3/16 male pups, vac./wormed, vet checked, raised & socialized in my home, $800/ea. Stephen White, 5184 Pegg Road, Princeton, 24740; 384-8823.


Trailer, bush net, stock, $3,500/or trade for 12 or 14’, bumper pull equal of value. Norman Young, 1282 Pumpkin Vine Rd., Buffalo, 25903; 607-5324.

Hand spinning fleece, white & natural colors, Border Leicester, Shetland & crosses, 1 oz - whole fleece, free $40. Linda Zinn, 2162 Skelton Run, Wallace, 26448; 782-3704.

Miscellaneous Wants
Pasture to lease in Upshur or surrounding counties for 15+ cow/calf pairs, must have fence & water. Mike Queen, 375 Teter Rd., Buckhannon, 26201; 613-6580.

Old sugar cane processing equipment, juice squeezer mill, sorghum mill, etc, William Schoolcraft, 5 Reynolds Ave., Elkview, 25501; 380-2776.

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