

# ARKANSAS GROWN

*A guide to the state's  
farms, food and forestry*



## Philanthropy in Forestry

*Arkansas Timber Industry  
Gives Back To The  
Community*

## The Gift That Keeps On Giving

*Arkansas Foodbank Gifts From The Heart Help Feed The Community*

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# *at Arkansas State.*



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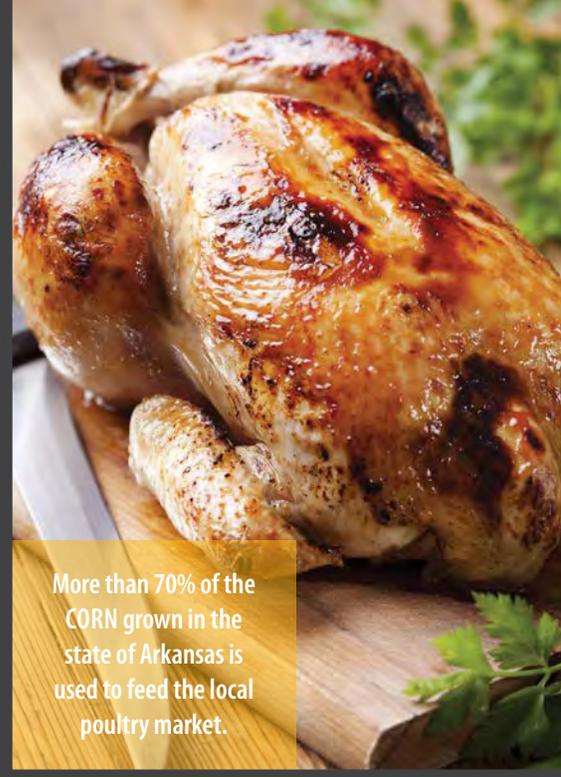
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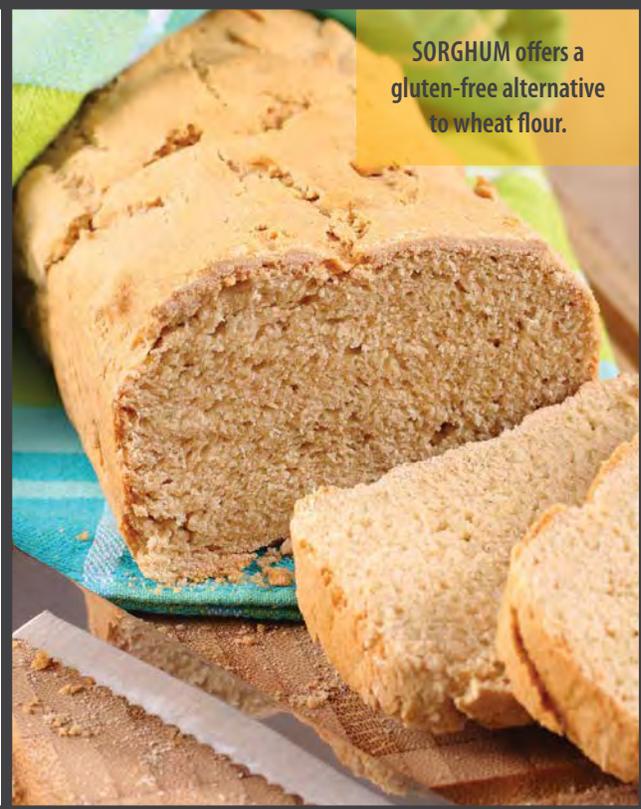


TOMMY YOUNG and his nephews, Blake and Jim Young, farm more than 7,000 acres of row crops near Tuckerman. Tommy's father, Norman, began their family farm in 1943 with just 40 acres.



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*The Ross Foundation uses various management practices to maintain healthy, productive and sustainable Arkansas forestland.*

**ARKANSAS  
GROWN** *A guide to the state's  
farms, food and forestry*

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# ARKANSAS GROWN *A guide to the state's farms, food and forestry*

2018 EDITION

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# Agriculture is Arkansas's #1 industry.



It is no accident that agriculture is Arkansas's Number 1 industry. Farmers and ranchers in Arkansas work hard to produce their crops and to raise their livestock.

In my time as governor, I have met farmers and ranchers all over the state. I have watched with admiration as you have

battled drought and dried out from floods.

The pay-off for your devotion is the abundance Arkansans enjoy at home and your sterling reputation for the high quality of all that we export nationally and internationally.

Whether you raise rice, cotton or soybeans; cattle, hogs or chickens; loblolly, red oak or sweet gum; you are an essential member of our agriculture community.

I grew up on a farm. I know many farmers and ranchers, and I hold you in the highest regard. Your hard work gives me bragging rights and makes my job of selling Arkansas easy.

Thank you for all that you invest in Arkansas. You can count on me to support and promote your work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Asa Hutchinson'.

Governor Asa Hutchinson  
State of Arkansas

# From Our Farms to Your Tables

Riceland Foods is a unique company. It is a family farmer owned cooperative. That means the guys and gals who grow their rice and deliver to Riceland facilities are also the owners of the company. Their rice is sustainably grown on land often handed down for generations. Riceland farmers raise families on the farms where they produce rice crops each year, and protecting natural resources, such as land and water, is a top priority. They proudly provide waterfowl habitat for wintering ducks and geese.

Rice grown by these farmers gets milled at facilities in Stuttgart and Jonesboro and packaged into Riceland and private label products. Rice bran oil is made in Riceland's edible oil refinery in Stuttgart.

Reach for Riceland Rice products in local supermarkets or online at **RicelandStore.com**.



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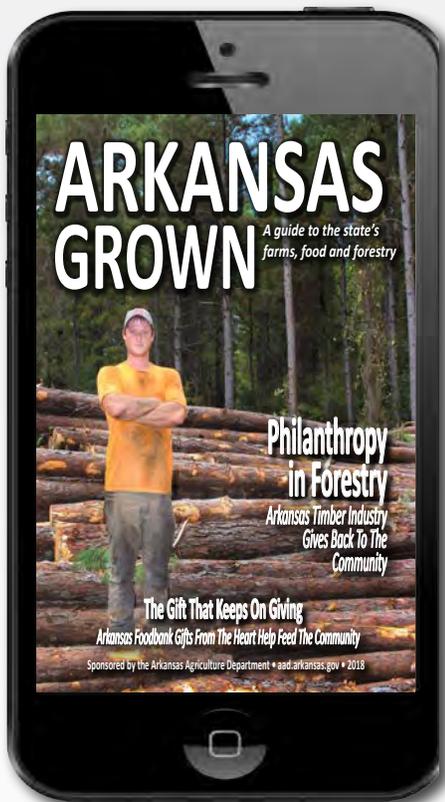
Riceland Bran Oil is made from rice grown by family farmers in Arkansas and the Missouri bootheel. Truly an American product from start to finish.



Enjoy convenience without sacrificing texture and flavor with new Riceland Boil-in-Bag products .

# Get Arkansas Grown On The Go

You can have the entire publication at your fingertips with our digital magazine. Read, share and enjoy the stories of Arkansas farmers wherever you go. Visit our website to view the complete online version.



Visit us online at  
[www.aad.arkansas.gov](http://www.aad.arkansas.gov)

# Welcome to the 2018 edition of Arkansas Grown.



The Arkansas Agriculture Department's goal with each edition of *Arkansas Grown* is to give you an overview of the breadth and diversity of Arkansas agriculture, our state's largest industry.

Agriculture contributes over \$21 billion to our state's economy

each year and accounts for 1 out of every 6 jobs. We consistently rank in the top 25 in the nation each year in the production of over 15 different agricultural commodities. Our diverse agricultural production ranges from livestock, poultry, aquaculture, row crops, specialty crops, and forestry. We have a lot to be proud of and a lot to be thankful for.

Across the state, our agriculture industry is comprised of creative, resilient, and hardworking individuals that are some of the best and brightest in the world. Arkansas's proud agricultural heritage has given us the ability to overcome challenges and work together for the benefit of the industry at the state, national, and international level. I'm confident Arkansas agriculture will remain strong and continue to provide safe and affordable food, fiber, fuel, and shelter for those here at home and across the globe.

Respectfully,

Wesley W. Ward, Secretary of Agriculture



# Agriculture: Arkansas's Top Industry

**T**he *Arkansas Grown* publication provides an annual overview of Arkansas's diverse agricultural industry, which is the top industry in the state. By offering personal stories of dedicated farm families and organizations that work tirelessly to provide food, fiber and fuel for the growing population, this magazine is intended to leave a lasting impression of how agriculture is part of the day to day lives of all individuals.

Arkansas is home to an estimated 43,000 farms across 13.7 million acres. We are also home to 19.2 million acres of forestland, which comprises 57% of the state's land area.

We consistently rank in the top 25 for the production of over 15 different agricultural commodities and we rank 16<sup>th</sup> in the nation with \$8 billion in total cash receipts from agriculture. Our top commodities in cash receipts are broilers (chickens) at \$3.13 billion, soybeans at \$1.43 billion, rice at \$1.028 billion, cattle/calves \$489 million, eggs at \$485 million, turkeys at \$434 million, corn at \$394 million, cotton lint at \$201 million, and hogs at \$64 million.

Arkansas continues to be the top producer of rice, baitfish and sport/game fish in the U.S. Arkansas also ranks among the top 25 states for acres harvested in other crops including peas, okra, turnips and more.

In 2017, exports provided more than \$1.2 billion to the state's agricultural industry. Exports to our nearest neighbors, Canada and Mexico, accounted for almost \$500 million. Arkansas's other leading export partners were Haiti, Hong Kong, Guatemala, the United Kingdom, Colombia, China, Vietnam, and Taiwan. Our state's top ten export products were poultry meat and products, rice, eggs, distilled spirits, prepared food and beverages, cotton, wheat, soybeans, beef, and forest products.

To learn more about the economic impact of Arkansas agriculture, visit the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service at [www.uaex.edu](http://www.uaex.edu), the National Agricultural Statistics Service at [www.nass.usda.gov](http://www.nass.usda.gov) or the Global Agricultural Trade System at [www.apps.fas.usda.gov/gats/default.aspx](http://www.apps.fas.usda.gov/gats/default.aspx).

The Arkansas Agriculture Department exists to serve our state's largest industry and takes its obligations seriously. The Arkansas Agriculture Department is dedicated to the development and implementation of policies and programs for Arkansas agriculture and forestry to keep its farmers and ranchers competitive in national and international markets while ensuring safe food, fiber, and forest products for the citizens of the state and nation.

# ARKANSAS AGRICULTURE OVERVIEW

Arkansas's Top Commodities in terms of cash receipts are:



\$3,136 Million

Broilers



\$1,437 Million



Soybeans

\$1,028 Million



Rice



\$489 Million

Cattle/Calves



\$485 Million

Eggs



\$434 Million

Turkeys



\$394 Million

Corn



\$201 Million

Cotton Lint



\$64 Million

Hogs

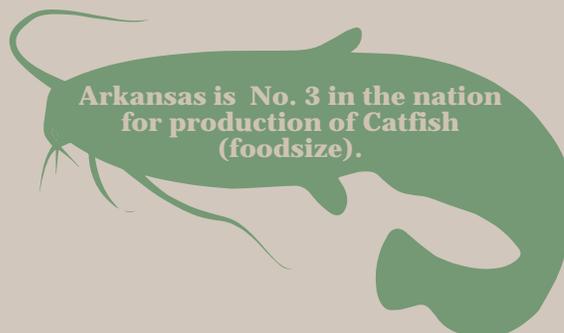
Arkansas is **#1** in the nation for rice production.

In 2016, **41%** of Arkansas land was comprised of farms.

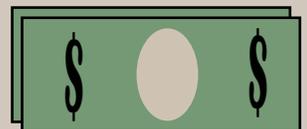
**57%** of the state is comprised of forests.

Arkansas has **43,000 farms** on **13.7 million acres** with an average farm size of **319 acres**.

Arkansas had **\$8.0 BILLION** in total agricultural cash receipts.



Arkansas is No. 3 in the nation for production of Catfish (foodsize).





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# Flying into the Future



Photo courtesy of the University of Arkansas

Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) used to seem like figments of a child's imagination, but today they are gaining popularity across many industries, including agriculture. College students in Arkansas now have a unique opportunity to learn about this technological trend and gain certification during enrollment.

In January 2017, the University of Arkansas launched the Operations Management of Unmanned Aircraft Systems class, which allows students across different degree programs to learn the fundamentals and applications

of UAS systems. The hands-on training course taught by Dr. Richard Ham, associate director of the Master of Science in Operations Management program in the College of Engineering, focuses on equipping students with the ability to enter their trade as part of the select group who can understand and implement appropriate flight plans for a specific operation.

Agricultural students enrolled in the course learn how to effectively select a UAS platform, understand flight regulations, develop complete autonomous flight plans, utilize 3-D modeling software, and apply

learned skills to receive their Federal Aviation Administration Remote Pilot Certificate, all within the 8-week course. This knowledge can be used to implement systems for crop planting, irrigation, observation, spray application, soil analysis and livestock monitoring.

The class is offered in person and online to reach students statewide. Additional Arkansas colleges offer similar courses to equip the next generation with knowledge needed to soar towards success in an ever changing agricultural landscape.

To learn more about the class, visit [www.uark.edu](http://www.uark.edu).



## Brighter Futures with 4-H and FFA

Students at Hermitage High School are going beyond the classroom with 4-H and the **National FFA Organization** to gain valuable knowledge about Arkansas agriculture. Over the years, Hermitage 4-H and FFA teams have been nationally recognized for bringing home the 1<sup>st</sup> place prize from the American Royal Livestock

Judging Contest, the National 4-H Forestry Invitational, the National FFA Forestry Career Development Event and many others. Coach Taylor Gwin said these students are gaining applicable life skills while working to achieve their goals.

"We've been very fortunate with success, because they put in the hours studying and working hard to

reach their goals," Gwin said. "4-H and FFA teach so many valuable skills like communication, work ethic and responsibility. The time and dedication these kids put into their team is incredible. They're the future of the agriculture industry and nothing can hold them back because they will achieve whatever they set their minds to."

# History In The Making

The Arkansas Century Farm Program recognizes Arkansas farm families who have owned and operated 10 acres or more for at least 100 years. The Arkansas Agriculture Department began the Century Farm Program in 2012 as a way to highlight the impact of these families on the agriculture industry as well as their overall contributions to our state.

Since the program began, over 376 farms have been inducted. At the 2017 induction ceremony, Governor Asa Hutchinson said that Arkansas farm families make the state strong.



“Through obstacles and challenges you have maintained your commitment to your farm and to your family. When families are strong, our communities are strong, and our state is strong,” Governor Hutchinson said.

The Arkansas Century Farm Program is open for applications each year from February until May. To get more information about applying, visit [www.aad.arkansas.gov/arkansas-century-farm-program](http://www.aad.arkansas.gov/arkansas-century-farm-program).



Cultivating leadership in public policy since 1939.

## GROW WITH US

**Agriculture is more than land and crops; it is Arkansas's economic foundation. We promote this industry and advocate for its future and our state's prosperity.**



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# It's All About The Critters

*Arkansas Made Products Straight From the Farm*



**Arkansas**  
**MADE**

**T**ammy Sue Pope said she remembers the day her son dropped by with a life changing surprise.

It all started with a phone call from their son asking if his parents were home. There was a strange noise in the background as he said, "I will be there in a little bit."

"He showed up with two goats, Bonnie and Clyde (Bonnie was 2-weeks-old and Clyde was 4-weeks-old), two nipples, one bottle and a gallon of milk. We were in the goat business," Tammy Sue said.

Moving forward, Tammy Sue Pope and her husband Skip designed and built everything needed for their dairy goat business from the ground up.

When they moved to their farm in 2005, they knew they wanted to do something but hadn't settled on what. Tammy Sue said she had always been crafty and wanted to utilize that passion in her work.

"We went up to Silver Dollar City not long after we had gotten the goats, to one of the little festivals and there was this pumpkin spice soap, but that bar of soap was \$8," Tammy Sue said. "My husband looked at me and said, 'there has to be a cheaper way.'"

Tammy Sue said she was already using homemade soap and since they now had the goats, it seemed like a natural decision to start her own business.

"I had the creative passion, we had the goats, a few years in we started having the milk because we were having babies, then one thing led to another and the soap business was born," she said.

The soap business was given the name "**Tammy Sue's Critters**" because of their passion for animals.

"Anybody who knows me will tell you that I am THE animal person," Tammy Sue said. "The name of the company was actually my husband's idea. 'It is Tammy Sue's Critters because it is all about the critters,' he said."

The soap made by Tammy Sue's Critters is 25% fresh goat's milk, with local sunflower oil, olive oil, responsibly sourced palm oil, coconut oil and lye to induce the saponification.

Over the years Tammy Sue's Critters has diversified. In addition to goat milk soap, the business also produces goat milk lotion, body butter, beeswax lip balm, solid scent perfumes, bug banisher insect repellent, owie ointment, cuticle salve, deodorant, beard oil, laundry soap, Loofah scrubs, bath salts, salt scrubs and numerous products from their mini-orchard.

The critter side of the business has also grown, as they now have 24 French Alpine dairy goats, two Angora goats, one llama, one donkey, two horses, four dogs, two cats, and 85 chickens.

Tammy Sue is the soap maker for P. Allen Smith's Moss Mountain Farm, where she hosts soap making demonstrations during the tour season. Not only can her products be found in their gift shop, but the Moss Mountain Farm goats were purchased from and raised by Tammy Sue.

Tammy Sue said that they primarily sell locally, but since



she is a member of the Arkansas Craft Guild she has the opportunity to take their products to several shows and craft fairs around the state. In the past, Tammy Sue's Critters products could be found at several farmers markets, but she said they are shifting their focus towards more on-farm activities, so they can help educate others. They also offer products on their website, Conway Locally Grown, Little Rock Locally Grown, numerous retailers statewide and several state parks.

As their business expands across several markets, Tammy Sue said that being able to participate in the Arkansas Grown and Arkansas Made programs is a huge benefit.

"We are primarily involved in locally grown markets. You have to grow it or produce it on your farm in order to be able to sell there," she said. "But when we visit other markets, there is a big difference in what is grown and produced in Arkansas in terms of quality."

She said there is a level of accountability involved in selling an Arkansas Made product with her name on it in her own backyard.

"I have to put a lot of hard work into what I do in order to make sure my product is the best it can be,"

Tammy Sue said.

She said it is also a passion of theirs to keep their products affordable.

"We are providing a quality product at a price point that the average person can afford," Tammy Sue said.

Looking to the future, the Popes are in the process of building a soap cottage that will give them the opportunity to host on-farm demonstrations, make-it and take-it classes, as well as agritourism experiences for people to stay and learn about the rural way of life.

"We feel that if we put it in a range where anyone can afford to have a wonderful afternoon or evening and come away with a product or a great experience, then we are furthering our mission in what it means to be local, to be in a community and to help that community and local economy grow," she said.

Tammy Sue stressed the need for people to understand what it means to be connected to the land and their community.

"We spend a lot of our time explaining to people how important the small farm and agriculture in this country is," she said. "It is important to stay connected to where your products and your food come from."

To learn more, visit [www.tammysuecritters.com](http://www.tammysuecritters.com).

**Arkansas**  
**GROWN**



**Arkansas**  
**MADE**

To learn more about marketing and branding programs of the Arkansas Agriculture Department, go to:

[arkansasgrown.org](http://arkansasgrown.org) or [aad.arkansas.gov](http://aad.arkansas.gov)





# Farm to Fork

*Arkansas Grown at Rabbit Ridge Farms*



**Arkansas  
GROWN**

Arkansas livestock producers utilize many different farming techniques to protect the environment and their animals. Alan and Angela Mahan of **Rabbit Ridge Farms** in Bee Branch, Arkansas are utilizing unique farm management practices to produce high quality beef, pork and poultry for their family and others across the state.

“I grew up on a row crop farm in the delta and Alan grew up on a dairy farm here at Rabbit Ridge,” Angela said. “Alan started his general contracting business after college and had a commercial cattle herd on the side. When we got married in 2013, we set a goal to raise all the meat that our family was going to eat.”

As the rented land the Mahans were grazing cattle on became unavailable, Angela said they were presented with a situation that made them look at alternative options.

“We had great areas of land that were being underused because they were wooded,” Angela said. “It didn’t feel right to take away the trees, so we started trying to figure out how we could maximize the property that we already owned to be self-sustaining.”

Angela said that forest-fed hogs were the natural choice because they can thrive in that environment.

“In the beginning we were planning on starting small but when we went to pick up our boar we ended up in an accidental pig rescue and Alan bought all the pigs the person had,” she said.

The Mahans then began working on building their brand and marketing the product.

“We realized it requires extensive marketing to build

a brand,” Alan said. “We used social media, word of mouth, networking events, free product samples and any other way we could get people to hear the name Rabbit Ridge Farms and not only remember it but also associate it with great food.”

The products produced at Rabbit Ridge Farms are designed to meet consumer demand. Alan said that

they uphold a commitment to their customers by producing antibiotic and hormone free meat in an ethical way.

“There’s a huge group of people who care about where their food comes from and how those animals are treated, from the conditions they live in to the diet they eat,” he said. “We can guarantee our product because the animal is born and bred here on our property. It originates here and ends here. I think that’s unique.”

Another unique aspect about the farm is that rather than raising livestock, Alan said he views it as growing grass and using the animals to harvest it.

“We run about 60 momma cows which graze down the grass and are followed by our chickens or hogs,” Alan said.

“The chickens are housed in a Salatin style mobile chicken coop, which we move daily allowing the chickens to fertilize the grass. The hogs improve our pastures because they aerate the soil, turnover manure and mix up the soil reseeding the ground.”

The Mahans said that they do things differently on their farm to give their customers a choice.

“I’m not saying the way we farm is the only way or the best way, but we want to provide a choice to a niche group of people. The American farmer does a fantastic



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“One of the things I love about being an Arkansas farmer is that we all support one another in our own unique ways. The bottom line is that the land, the animals and taking care of others are common foundations shared by all farmers.”

~ Angela Mahan

---

job and are very competitive in global markets from row-cropping to cattle or hog farming,” Alan said. “This is the method that works for us, on our land with our customers. These pigs process the grass and nuts more efficiently and we feel it gives the meat a better flavor as they constantly move around, creating marbling.”

Angela said that they are proud to raise their Arkansas Grown certified products for the families they serve.

“One of the things I love about being an Arkansas farmer is that we all support one another in our own unique ways. The bottom line is that the land, the animals and taking care of others are common foundations shared by all farmers,” she said. “Our motto is ‘from our farm to your family’ and that’s what it all comes down to.”

The family also serves their customers through The Venue at Rabbit Ridge, which encompasses a retail space, an inspected kitchen for product development, lodging and event space for parties or weddings.



“The Venue is the heart of the farm because that is where agriculture education, agritourism and entertainment takes place,” Angela said. “We feel like Arkansas has a lot to offer and what better way to showcase that than through an agriculture entertainment area.”

Besides teaching people about the rural way of life at their weekly farm to table lunches and special events featuring local musicians, Alan said the venue also allows them to give back to the community by

showcasing their farming practices for the public.

“The venue lets us give back. There are traditions and ways of farming that have been lost over time,” Alan said. “When you walk in the front door of the venue, we have designed it so that when you look through the glass it mimics an old-time smokehouse. We can display meats and age them in a modern way while teaching about the original curing methods.”

For more on **The Venue** events or Rabbit Ridge Farms products, visit [www.rabbitridgefarm.com](http://www.rabbitridgefarm.com).



# Sheep For Meat, Milk and Wool

## *Homegrown by Heroes on Willowbrook Farm*

Since 2015, the Arkansas Agriculture Department has been recognizing farmer veterans through the Homegrown by Heroes branding program. The program, overseen by the Farmer Veteran Coalition, allows farmers to label their agriculture products as veteran-produced. Located near Searcy, **Willowbrook Farm** offers sheep meat, milk and wool, as well as a variety of other Homegrown by Heroes products. Jan Farmer said the veteran owned and operated homestead takes farming back to the basics as they create products for their family as well as to sell in the community.

“My husband is a 20-year veteran of the Air Force and I am a 30-year veteran of the Air Force Reserve,” Farmer said. “We met during aviation school in Little Rock and later got married. When my husband retired, we wanted a homestead for fresh milk and eggs.”

Although the couple started with dairy goats, dairy sheep later caught their interest and led to the development of the farm as it is today.

“We originally had dairy goats, but a few years into it we saw an article on raising dairy sheep,” she said. “Living in England we had been introduced to sheep and the varieties of European cheeses made from sheep and goat milk. We started doing our research and then picked up our first pair of dairy sheep in 2009.”

Farmer said that acquiring the sheep for the farm was a challenge as dairy sheep are not common in the state.

“You can’t go to your local auction and buy dairy sheep,” she said. “There are more dairy sheep farms up north, but that is a long and costly drive. I have bought sheep from other dairies in Tennessee, Wisconsin, Nebraska, and Oklahoma. I am doing my part to build the dairy sheep industry in Arkansas so that people do not have to go out of state to find them.”

### EXPANDING MARKETS

As the farm grew, it diversified in production. Farmer said once the dairy was up and running, they had more sheep, which led to the meat and wool products. She said they offer other products to help make the farm self-sustaining.

“In the marketplace I offer various homemade breads, lamb meat, crocheted projects from sheep wool, as well as goose and duck on a limited basis, which all help support the farm,” she said.

Farmer said there was a limited market for raw unwashed wool, but found that if it was made into a useable product, people would buy it. She said she utilizes another local farmer to spin her wool into yarn, which she can then crochet into sellable products.

“I have someone who washes and colors the wool and makes it into yarn. Then I get it back and make it into something,” she said. “This allows me to focus on other things here on the farm while also helping another Arkansas farmer make a living.”

### EDUCATING OTHERS

As a producer, Farmer said she values educating the next generation about how to raise their own food.

“I go to the Farmers Markets to introduce people to sheep meat, milk and wool and to sell my product,” she said. “People are always shocked when I explain that you can milk sheep. I encourage them to enjoy something different than what they normally see in the grocery store. I also enjoy teaching people how they can have their own homestead, even on a few acres, to take pride in knowing they raised something themselves.”

Farmer said her future plans involve bringing kids to the farm to let them learn about life on the dairy.

“Right now, I use my Facebook page to show aspects



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Ground Lamb

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Jan Farmer milks one of her dairy ewes on Willowbrook Farm near Searcy.

of the farm with things like shearing time. For years I have also taken my sheep to the Pioneer Village in Searcy so that people who come can actually touch the sheep and talk to the farmer that raises them,” she said. “I would like to do something similar here that would allow kids to visit and see how the dairy is run.”

### VETERAN RAISED

The Homegrown by Heroes program has helped market Willowbrook Farm products to consumers by showing that they are supporting a local veteran farmer, Farmer said.

“Homegrown by Heroes brought me into the network and gave me information on conferences and other programs that really opened doors for me,” she said. “The bottling equipment I have in my dairy was purchased with a scholarship provided by the Farmer Veteran Coalition. It’s encouraging to see that this program is opening doors for people like us to not only enjoy the farm life but to be in business as well.”

To learn more about Homegrown by Heroes, visit [www.arkansasgrown.org/homegrown-by-heroes](http://www.arkansasgrown.org/homegrown-by-heroes).

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Arkansas Fishermen's Center

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U.S. FARM-RAISED **Catfish** 100% AMERICAN

U.S. Farm-Raised Catfish is the safest, freshest and healthiest fish available. Thanks to our hardworking farmers and strict standards, you can rely on that perfectly mild flavor year round.

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Holly Springs Homestead, LLC

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# Farming as a Family for a Century

*Holly Springs Homestead invites the community  
to experience the tradition*



For the Alston family, farming is a way of life. Luke and Deedee along with their two sons, Ryan and Drey, operate **Holly Springs Homestead** in Mena. The 2017 Arkansas Farm Family of the Year raises beef cattle, chickens, a variety of crops for their on-farm market and have an agritourism operation. Luke said their farms date back to over 100 years ago.

“Both farms we own were homesteaded by a great, great grandfather of mine, one from each side of the family,” Luke said. “The Century Farm that started it all has been farmed continuously by my family for 120 years. Deedee’s family farm, which we also own, has been in her family since 1923. We take pride in being a Century Farm and people recognize that we are very invested in our products.”

The farm originally raised cattle, but has diversified production over time.

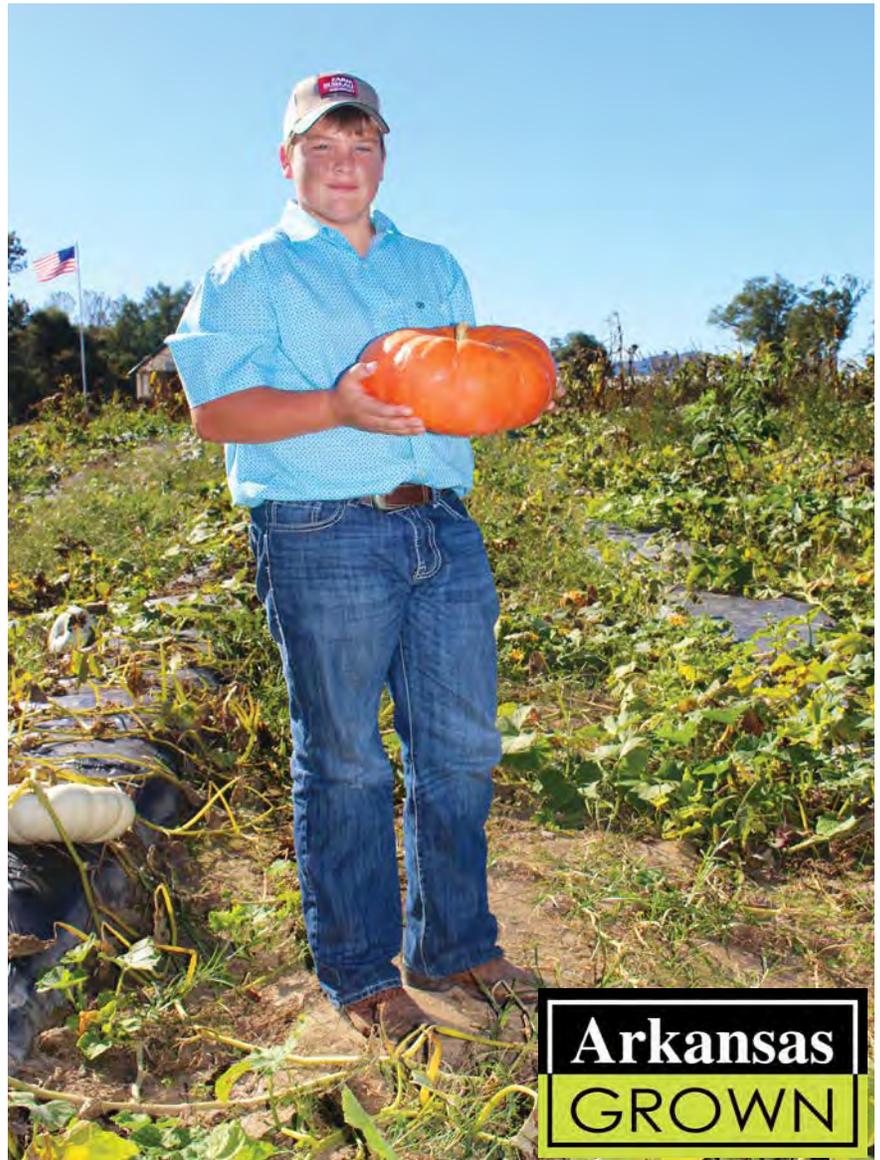
“Raising beef cattle is what my family has done forever,” Luke said. “Growing up we were seedstock producers of registered Angus cattle. We still have 80 commercial cows that we manage like a registered herd and we market our own USDA inspected beef here on our farm. I am still very passionate about the beef industry, but we have diversified to incorporate the agritourism business.”

The Alstons did not originally plan on agritourism.

“Luke and I both had really good jobs by the world’s standards, but we decided to leave the corporate world to come back to our roots, bring our family closer together, and have a better opportunity to share the word of agriculture,” Deedee said. “Our original plan was to raise chickens and cattle full time, but when we were building the broiler houses, there was a delay in construction. During that delay, we planted a wide variety of produce to sell in our on-site farm stand, which really began the agritourism side of things.”

The family opened their on-farm market in 2015 and has been rapidly growing ever since. Deedee said their passion for education has propelled their growth.

“At first, we just sold honey from our bees,” she said. “We found there was a need for fresh foods locally and an even greater need for education about how to grow



things. Pretty soon, we were producing thousands of pounds of crops off land that months before was just hay pasture. We want people to experience the farm and learn how to grow things themselves.”

Today, the farm differs each season. Besides the beef cattle and eight poultry houses, the Alstons have 15 acres in vegetable and berry production. They provide agriculture education through U-Pick berry experiences in the summer. In the fall, guests enjoy a pumpkin patch, corn maze and hay rides. Around December, the family sells Christmas trees, wreaths, hot chocolate, scratch-made baked goods, homemade ornaments and offers caroling hay rides. Their barnyard offers children hands-on experiences with various animals. Perhaps the most talked about aspect of the farm is Adeline’s Mud Pie Kitchen. Deedee said she took the idea from her childhood, sketched it for Luke to build, and ended up with success.

“As a child, I had the ability to be creative and use my imagination,” she said. “We see lots of kids on the farm and Adeline’s Mud Pie Kitchen was created for them to have a chance to be a kid. There’s an old-time hand pump with buckets to carry water, a variety of dishes and everything needed to make mud pies. It’s a family environment where as many adults play as do kids.”

The Alstons attribute much of their success to having quality Arkansas Grown products, while providing an experience that teaches about the farm to table movement.

“People appreciate that our products are grown in Arkansas and go directly from field to farm stand,” Deedee said. “They enjoy the on-farm experience and learn more by seeing it rather than just hearing about it.”

The Alstons use their formal education daily.

“Farming can be a hard gig, but we use our degrees every day and we are very grateful for our education,” Deedee said. “We strive to educate ourselves with an effective message that is backed up by accurate data.”

Luke said all aspects of the farm work together to make things run effectively and efficiently.

“Having chicken houses allows us to educate on facts, like all chicken is antibiotic free. It has also produced a cash flow that allows us to do other things. The chicken litter is priceless because it fertilizes our land, which means we can feed less hay, grow better crops and raise better cattle. We use what we have on the farm, like

our six-acre corn maze, that will go to feed our steers after the fall season. Everything goes hand-in-hand.”

As the 2017 Farm Family of the Year, Luke said they hope to use the publicity to reach more people.

“We are beyond honored, but we are humble and not the type of people that want our faces in the paper,” Luke said. “We just hope it will bring more people who don’t know about agriculture out to the farm, so they can experience the lifestyle we love. The little kids especially are what it’s all about because they are like sponges with 1,000 questions. There are kids who have never seen an animal up close and they see our bull in the barnyard and ask if he is a buffalo. When we can impact a child’s life, our hard work pays off.”

For more, visit [www.hollyspringshomestead.com](http://www.hollyspringshomestead.com).

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“People appreciate that our products are grown in Arkansas and go directly from field to farm stand.”

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~Deedee Alston

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# Heritage in the Heart of the Ozarks

**O**zark Family Farm may have only begun three years ago, but the farming methods of the McClure family date back to the 1800s. The farm, located among the Ozarks in Salem, consists of cattle and chickens raised by Jason, his wife Sarah and their son Calvin. Jason McClure said the idea for the farm came from a college project.

“The genesis of the farm was when I was getting my graduate certificate in applied statistics,” he said. “I had to do a research project and since I was interested in farming, I chose grass-fed beef. In conducting market research, I found there was a demand for it and that nearly 85% of the people I surveyed didn’t know a farmer.”

Before long, **Ozark Family Farm** began with a herd of Angus and Wagyu cattle.

“We raise cattle in a sustainable and ethical way that provides safe, healthy, and delicious food for our friends,” McClure said. “I picked Wagyu beef because I always wanted to be an industry leader in something. Wagyu is a Japanese breed renowned for being highly marbled and tender with a lot of omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids.”

McClure said they also sought out a unique chicken breed that offered high-quality meat.

“I selected a French chicken called Bresse because it’s the best tasting chicken out there and not many people in Arkansas are raising them,” he said. “Food is important, and every meal should be an experience. I feel like if we can bring great tasting, locally sourced food to the marketplace, then people will respond well.”

The farm’s location amidst an Amish settlement has given the McClure family an opportunity to start a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) partnership designed to promote a diverse, healthy diet based on seasonal eating. McClure said ‘Growing Wellness in the Workplace’ is the only Amish farmed workplace CSA in Arkansas.

“Wellness in the Workplace is marketed toward businesses that want to improve their wellness programs as we deliver fresh produce directly to their workplace,” he said. “The Amish community has good hard workers that focus on having a quality product. The Amish have a strong belief system and will only partner with people who will not violate their integrity. We work well together because we use a lot of old-time farming practices.”

As a teacher, McClure said his passion for education has propelled him to stand behind the Farm to Table movement and do his part to teach about agriculture.

“People want to know where their food comes from,” he said. “I think marketing an Arkansas Grown product helps show people that there are real farmers out here raising quality foods in a sustainable and environmentally friendly way.”

Ozark Family Farm uses sustainable farming practices to fulfill their mission to raise high quality products in a responsible way.

“Our focus is nurturing our land, water, and air,” McClure said. “Our promise is to be a good steward of our natural resources.”



### *Ozark Style Heritage Beef Delivered to you.*

Bulk purchasing made easy with exact-pricing of individually and vacuumed sealed packages of USDA inspected meat. Our program allows us to offer **better discounts** then purchasing **by-the-animal** based on “**hanging weight**.” You get big discounts without the hassle of dealing with the uncertainties of processing. **Plus it’s great tasting, locally grown with no fillers and we bring it to you!**

<b>Life Changing 100% Grass-fed Naturally Raised Beef</b>				
<b>Fraction of Beef</b>	<b>1/4</b>	<b>1/2</b>	<b>3/4</b>	<b>Whole</b>
<b>Total Steaks</b>	<b>11 lb</b>	<b>18 lb</b>	<b>27 lb</b>	<b>37 lb</b>
<b>Total Roasts &amp; Ribs</b>	<b>22 lb</b>	<b>32 lb</b>	<b>49 lb</b>	<b>65.5 lb</b>
<b>Total Ground &amp; Round</b>	<b>55 lb</b>	<b>82 lb</b>	<b>121 lb</b>	<b>162 lb</b>
<b>Extra Pieces &amp; Cuts</b>	<b>12 lb</b>	<b>18 lb</b>	<b>24 lb</b>	<b>36 lb</b>
<b>Total Price</b>	<b>\$844</b>	<b>\$1,231</b>	<b>\$1,759</b>	<b>\$2,272</b>
<b>Savings from Retail</b>	<b>\$205</b>	<b>\$355</b>	<b>\$565</b>	<b>\$862</b>

*\*To secure your order we require a 50% deposit and the balance upon delivery. Based on current market prices.*

*To order call Jason McClure at 501-912-9695 or visit [OzarkFamilyFarm.com](http://OzarkFamilyFarm.com)*



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**GIFTS FROM THE  
HEART**

“WE MUST BECOME THE CHANGE  
WE WANT TO SEE.”

-Mahatma Gandhi



## *The Gift That Keeps On Giving*

**Arkansas Foodbank Gifts From The Heart Help Feed The Community**

**F**ood insecurity is a very real issue for many Arkansans. In 2016, the Arkansas Rice Depot merged with the **Arkansas Foodbank** to become united in the fight against hunger. Today the Arkansas Foodbank is the largest hunger relief organization in the state. They distributed over 26 million pounds of food to Arkansans in 33 counties last year. One of the Arkansas Foodbank's efforts to help feed the hungry has proven to be a multifaceted benefit. Brandi Johnston with the Arkansas Foodbank said their “Gifts From The Heart” are gifts that give twice.

“Many people have no idea how severe the hunger issue is in our state,” Johnston said. “When you buy our gourmet rice and bean mixes from the foodbank gift shop, 100% of the proceeds go right back into feeding the hungry. All the rice we use is grown in Arkansas, by Arkansas farmers, and it is hand packaged right here at our facility. So not only are you supporting

the agriculture industry in our state and helping feed the hungry, but you are also educating others on the hunger issue and getting a quality product to give or keep for yourself.”

The idea for the program came from former Arkansas Rice Depot CEO, Laura Rhea. Johnston said Rhea used bags of rice for community engagement.

“When Laura went out to meet with people at fairs and things, she was struggling to get people to come talk to her because hunger is not a happy topic,” Johnston said. “She noticed people had giveaways and hand-outs to engage the crowd, so she got a unique idea. She made up bags of rice mixes with seasonings based on her own recipes and gave them out so people would talk with her about feeding the hungry.”

The product, originally called Simple Pleasures with the tagline ‘Gifts From The Heart,’ quickly gained popularity with the community and notable figures.

“President Clinton was always a big supporter of the Arkansas Rice Depot,” Johnston said. “He wanted to help with this project, so he shared a recipe and that’s how we got our Presidential Parmesan.”

The product is sold by churches, corporations and in the foodbank gift shop, which features products that are all Arkansas grown or Arkansas made. Johnston said the high traffic through the gift shop allows them to effectively market the local products.

“We get thousands of people coming through our doors every year,” Johnston said. “There are around 12,000 volunteers, not counting the people who come for meetings or events. We love highlighting all things Arkansas to give back to the community.”

In the future, Johnston said they hope to incorporate the official Arkansas Grown logo into their label to show support for the farmers that raise the rice and to take pride in one of the state’s strongest agricultural sectors.

“The overall concept of the Arkansas Grown program really aligned with our branding and who we are as an organization,” Johnston said. “Arkansas is known for producing half of the nation’s rice. The label draws people in with a sense of pride and allows us to

celebrate our farmers for the work they do.”

Johnston said the Arkansas Foodbank relies heavily on Arkansas farmers and their 450 partner agencies to distribute rice and fresh produce to the hungry.

“The agricultural community is integral as farmers donate leftover produce to us directly or through the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance’s gleaning program,” she said. “We are that essential link between farmers and the community, because we can take large amounts of produce from farmers and distribute it out to partner agencies that then make sure it reaches the hands of a hungry child or family.”

As a distribution center, Johnston said the Arkansas Foodbank could not function without community support. She said that the members of the community who are committed to feeding those in need

are invaluable to programs like “Gifts From The Heart.”

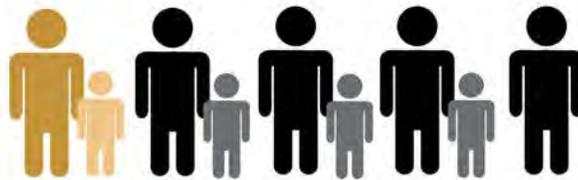
“When you give a gift you increase awareness that can help us gain another supporter,” Johnston said. “You are not just buying a product, but you are also helping someone in need.”

To get involved with the Arkansas Foodbank or to order your own Gifts From The Heart product, visit [www.arkansasfoodbank.org](http://www.arkansasfoodbank.org).



1 in 5

Arkansans struggle to feed their family...



25%

of Arkansas children have limited access to adequate food...

**The Arkansas Foodbank is there to help!**

In 2017 they provided

**22.1 MILLION MEALS**

for the **280,000** Arkansans they help serve.



The mission of the Arkansas Agriculture Department's Livestock and Poultry Commission (ALPC) is to safeguard human and animal health and assure food safety and quality for Arkansas livestock and poultry industries.

The ALPC serves and protects the animal agriculture industries of Arkansas. For more information on ALPC programs, regulations and services, go to:

[aad.arkansas.gov/arkansas-livestock-and-poultry-commission](http://aad.arkansas.gov/arkansas-livestock-and-poultry-commission)



DIAGNOSTICS

**202,033**

procedures performed



DISEASE  
PREVENTION

**687,897** livestock inspected at markets

**45,906** Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA) tests

**68,860** calf vaccinations

**646** animal movement permits issued

**10,768** health certificates processed

**3,328** EIA licensed verifiers



FAIRS

**\$1,433,397**

provided to Arkansas fairs



FOOD SAFETY

**1,659,372,762**

lbs. of chicken meat inspected

**775,100,195**

lbs. of turkey meat inspected



FOOD  
QUALITY

**101,270,490**

dozen eggs graded



NPIP

**14,840**

poultry flocks certified





# Faith, Family & Farrowing

**S**wine is one of Arkansas's top ten commodities in terms of cash receipts. The state produces more than 1.2 million hogs annually on farms like the 1,300 sow operation owned by the Anderson family near Hope, Arkansas. Owner Mark Anderson said that although hog production is very labor intensive and time consuming, he is passionate about the family endeavor.

"The most rewarding part of being a farmer is spending everyday with my family and being on my own place," Mark said. "I love it and wouldn't trade it for anything."

Mark's wife Judy Anderson said that their farm is run by faith and family.

"Faith is a big portion of our family and our farm. We may argue like anyone else, but we love our family and love working with them," Judy said. "We have 10 grandkids and it's neat to see them come to the farm, be interested and get involved; that's what it's all about."

In addition to strong family values, the Andersons said they place a high degree of dedication to caring for their hogs. Mark said their first concern is making sure the pigs are fed, watered, comfortable and happy.

"This is our whole life and we are ruined if they aren't performing the way they need to," Mark said. "The last thing we want is one sick or mistreated. We take care of them just like you would a pet because we are partial to them after a while and some even have names."

Although they are both grown and have families of their own, the Andersons' sons Leith and Joey help take care of the daily needs of the pigs on the farm. Mark said that it's not uncommon for each member of the family to put in 14-hour days cleaning the barns and tending to each animal's individual health needs.

"We start out every single day walking through, looking at every individual hog here," Joey said. "The biggest thing we do is make sure each one is healthy, from the newborns to the oldest hog on the farm."

## FUTURISTIC FARMING

Modern advancements in agriculture have changed the way the Andersons care for each of their hogs. The family originally bought the farm in 2001. At that time, it had a much older and smaller farrowing facility on it. With some help from his wife and sons, Mark was able to expand and update the barn to the modern facility it

is today. From the old hand feeding method to the new computer systems that read ear tags to dispense accurate rations, Mark said there is no comparison of how much more efficient the farm is today.

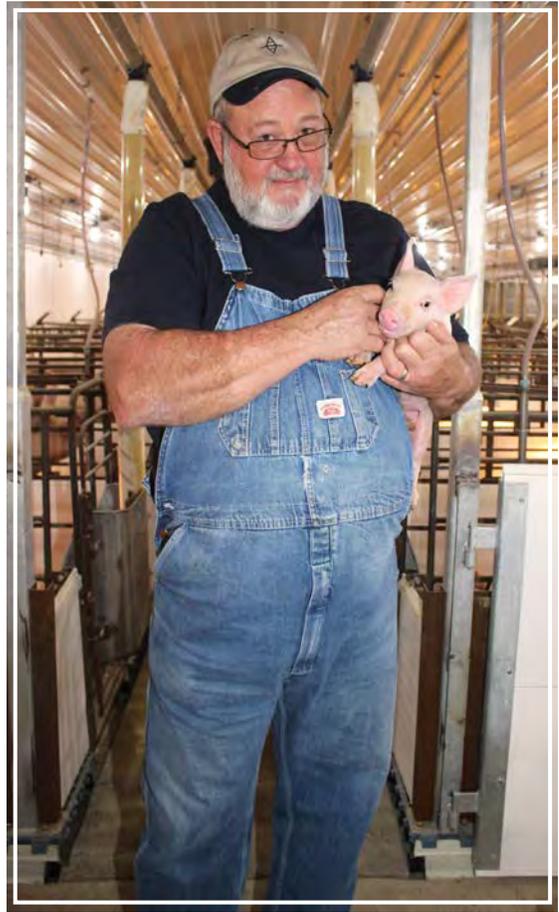
“It’s amazing how far we have come in the hog industry in 30 years,” Mark said. “The old farm had natural ventilation with curtains that went up and down, drippers and fans. This one is completely enclosed and everything is automatic as far as temperature, ventilation and the feeding systems.”

### INDUSTRY WITH AN IMPACT

Mark said that they are proud to be pig farmers because family farms like his have a positive impact on their community and the state as a whole.

“It’s more than just growing hogs here in Arkansas. With a farm this size, we have three families that are making a living from it,” Mark said. “Not to mention we are doing quite a bit for the local economy and if you don’t believe me just look at some of my electric bills!”

To learn more about swine production in the state, visit the Arkansas Pork Producers Association at [www.arpork.com](http://www.arpork.com).



Conventional, Organic.  
Grass-fed, Grain-fed.  
Genetically enhanced, Non-engineered.  
Free-range, Barn-raised.  
Large scale, Small scale.



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# U.S. Beef in China:

*Positioned for Long-Term Success*



It is nearly 7,000 miles from Little Rock to Beijing, China's capital city. The sheer distance sounds daunting. But as Arkansas's 21,000 beef producers look to grow and profit in 2018 and beyond, the Chinese market is too big to ignore.

China represents a population of nearly 1.4 billion people and is quickly becoming the largest beef importer in the world. In 2011 China imported 27,000 metric tons of beef. By 2016, that number rose to 600,000 metric tons – an eye-popping increase of over 2,000%.

Unfortunately, U.S. producers were unable to capitalize on much of the rapid market growth. In an event commonly referred to as “The Cow that Stole Christmas”, the first and only classical case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) was discovered in the United States in December, 2003. The source turned out to be a Canadian-born dairy cow in Washington state, but the economic damage was swift. China (along with Japan and Korea) closed their market to U.S. beef products overnight.

Following that low point, market access recovered throughout the Asia-Pacific region. It started with Japan and Korea, which today are the top two export markets in the world for U.S. beef. Progress in China moved slower, despite intense lobbying from U.S. government officials and beef industry representatives. In the end, it took 13 long years and countless meetings before China agreed to restore access for U.S. beef in May, 2017.

Some critics have questioned the true benefits of reopening the Chinese market. If you only consider the sales results from the first few quarters under the agreement, you might question the impact, too. But over the long-term, the incredible potential of access to Chinese consumers is undeniable.

No serious analysts expected U.S. beef sales to sky-rocket in a matter of months. It takes time to

develop business relationships, understand consumer preferences, and build demand. For example, many Chinese consumers have grown accustomed to beef imports from grass-finished cattle. They are not familiar with the distinctive flavor profile of grain-finished cattle common in U.S. production. Once Chinese consumers get a taste of high-quality U.S. beef, sales are likely to grow rapidly. That is why the U.S. Meat Export Federation estimates that U.S. beef sales in China will reach \$300 million annually within the next five years.

When examining the market access agreement with China, it is critical to remember our industry's history in the Asia-Pacific region. In Korea, we have seen how expanded market access unlocks new

export opportunities for U.S. producers over the long-term. Market access negotiated in the Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement helped us transform Korea into a \$1 billion export market in less than ten years.

Crucially, these export opportunities allow U.S. producers to maximize the value of each head, benefiting every segment of the industry. Korean consumers are willing

to pay a premium for cuts that Americans find less desirable (short rib and tongue, for example). As a result, U.S. producers can generate additional value by exporting these cuts to Korea – value that simply would not exist if U.S. producers sold to the domestic market alone.

Our agreement with China is not perfect by any means. Some non-scientific restrictions on U.S. imports remain, chief among them the requirement that all beef imports come from non-hormone treated cattle. Nonetheless, the U.S. is well-positioned to become a leading source of U.S. beef in China in the coming years. That is something that producers in Arkansas and across the country should celebrate.

- Story & Photos by Kent Bacus



Former NCBA President Craig Uden and USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue join the "Cutting of the Prime Rib" ceremony with VP, COFCO Group Luan Richeng.

# How Important is the Arkansas Cattle Industry?

- Cow Calf operations are the 4th largest commodity
- \$1.592 billion in contributions to Arkansas's economy
- \$686 million in total cash receipts
- Arkansas ranks 11th in the nation for beef cows
- All 75 counties in Arkansas have cattle operations
- There are 1,750,000 head of cattle in the state

ARKANSAS  
AGRICULTURE  
DEPARTMENT



Sources: Arkansas Agricultural Statistics, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2017 Cattle Inventory Report, National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), Agricultural Statistics Board, United States Department of Agriculture

Arkansas  
Beef Producers  
Raising the  
Beef We Eat

*Thank you!*

For more information about the beef checkoff, visit [www.arkansasbeef.org](http://www.arkansasbeef.org) or call 501-228-1222





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2016-2017

# Milking It

## at Simon Brothers Dairy

Since 1994, the Simon family has been milking cows on their dairy farm located in the heart of Conway. Brothers Frederic, Matt and Jason along with their parents Mike and Mary Jo run the Simon Brothers Dairy operation. The Arkansas dairy has been in business for more than 20 years, but Mike said they are one of only a few still operating after all this time.

“When we started milking there were around 1,500 Grade A dairy operations in the state of Arkansas. Now, we are one of less than 50 operations left,” he said.

Despite the hardships that come with owning a dairy, the family said they have no intention of giving up.

“In a good year I like it too much to quit, and in a bad year it would cost too much to get out,” Mike said.

Matt Simon said selling milk at the cost of production makes things difficult, but that the farm looks for ways to improve with what they have.

“This is something we all were born into and grew up doing; it just got more serious as we got older,” he said.

“It’s a rewarding lifestyle if you put in the effort to change things that don’t work and not run from them.”

The family farm has expanded and adopted new methods over the years to increase profitability.

“When we started we had 65 cows that were grass and hay fed with feed supplemented. Today, we have just under 500 head between our

200 milking cows, the calves and the replacement heifers we raise,” Mike said.

“We grow about 350 acres of corn now for silage to reduce feed cost. Over time we saw a need to expand the operation to stay competitive and to produce our own silage and forage to be profitable.”

The family also now utilizes more technology to maintain efficiency.

“When tour groups visit the farm, they are shocked to hear that we use technology,” Frederic said. “We have GPS systems in our tractors and we use an electronic heat detection ear tag system for breeding that even shows the cow’s estrous cycle on our phones.”

As a local small business owner, the family said the farm is a link in a bigger chain.

“Farming is like building an automobile. Most people don’t think about how many people it took to build that vehicle that you drive every day, but it’s the same way with our food,” Mike said. “We start milking at 3:00 a.m. and milk twice a day every day so that you can go to the grocery store and pick up what you need.”

Mary Jo said they use practices that help them ensure product safety.

“People have told me they will pay \$6 for milk that says ‘antibiotic free’ on it,” she said. “They are relieved when I explain that we cannot sell milk with antibiotics in it. If an animal was treated, that milk goes down the drain. The Department of Health tests for it, the milk plant tests for it and USDA and FDA regulations are in place to ensure that our product is safe.”

As an integral part in the community, Matt said they contribute to feeding a growing population.

“America has the safest, cheapest most abundant food supply in the world,” he said. “But there is an infrastructure that people take for granted every day. There is a whole network of people that paid close attention to the quality of that product before you ever consume it. Your food came from farms like ours.”





# Industry Innovation

Tyson Discovery Center™ is Home to New Product Ideas

As the leading agricultural sector in Arkansas, the poultry industry accounts for 48.5 percent of total cash receipts and ranks Arkansas 2nd in the nation for broiler production. Over 150,000 jobs rely upon poultry production within our state.

One of the world's largest poultry companies is located in Northwest Arkansas. Tyson Foods, Inc. consists of 122,000 team members nationwide, and reported \$38.3 billion in sales during the 2017 fiscal year. The diversified protein company produces one in five pounds of chicken, beef, and pork in the U.S. One of Tyson Foods' two research and development centers launching innovative ideas to support the U.S. food industry is in Arkansas, at the **Tyson Discovery Center**.

## CENTER OF ATTENTION

In 2007 construction was completed on the *Tyson Discovery Center* in Springdale, Arkansas. Since then Research and Development team members have brought many new products to life. In 2017, close to 500 new projects were launched in retail and convenience stores, schools, military bases, delis and restaurants. Discovery Center Chef Thomas Wenrich said the center is a hub for advancement via the gathering of people and ideas.

"When the *Tyson Discovery Center* opened 10 years ago, it was the first of its kind," Wenrich said. "The hub of food innovation started right here in Springdale.

The idea behind it was to find faster, more efficient ways to innovate and centralize development."

Public Relations Manager Derek Burleson said the company's chairman was the driving force behind the completion of the thriving center.

"Chairman John H. Tyson, the grandson of the founder, felt very strongly and passionately that in order for our company to grow and lead food innovation in the future, this facility had to be built," Burleson said.

The *Tyson Discovery Center* consists of 19 test kitchens, a team of certified culinologists, sensory labs and a USDA-inspected pilot plant. Each kitchen is designed to simulate the environment in which the food will be prepared. Chef Wenrich said the certified research chefs play an important role in new product development, serving as the link between an idea and a tangible product.

"The consumer is changing rapidly so it's important to be predictive of the marketplace. I feel that is where innovation exists and the chefs help," he said.

The chefs are able to obtain totally unbiased opinions

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"We feed families. That's who we are and that's what we do. We wouldn't have a business without the family farmers."

~ Director of Government Relations Jeff Wood

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on their work via sensory labs, which allow consumers to perform various tests and give valuable feedback.

“Sensory labs are the best way to ground ourselves with the consumer” Wenrich said. “They help us make sure we deliver on what we are promising.”

## CONSISTENT DEDICATION TO INNOVATION

The *Tyson Discovery Center* has proven to be valuable for product invention as well as community development, by impacting the state’s ever-growing poultry industry.

“Anything we can do in research and discovery to market a specific protein on a global scale is good for the contract growers that Tyson Foods works with,” Burlison said. “We’re always trying to expand our ability to sell the birds they grow. It comes full circle in the Discovery Center with the chefs, culinologists, nutritionists and everyone else who works to market that product.”

Tyson relies on the Arkansas family farmer to establish a positive global influence in the poultry industry.

“We feed families,” Director of Government Relations Jeff Wood said. “That’s who we are and that’s what we do. We wouldn’t have a business without the family farmers.”

This network of farmers and industry leaders builds accountability in Tyson Foods.

“We have a \$1.7 billion economic impact in Arkansas,” Wood said. “From buying crops for inputs to our contract growers and family farmers, we’re part of the agricultural fabric. There’s responsibility that comes with that, so we strive to do our best in everything we do.”

The center has also made an impact for local non-profits, donating 780,000 pounds of food since opening.

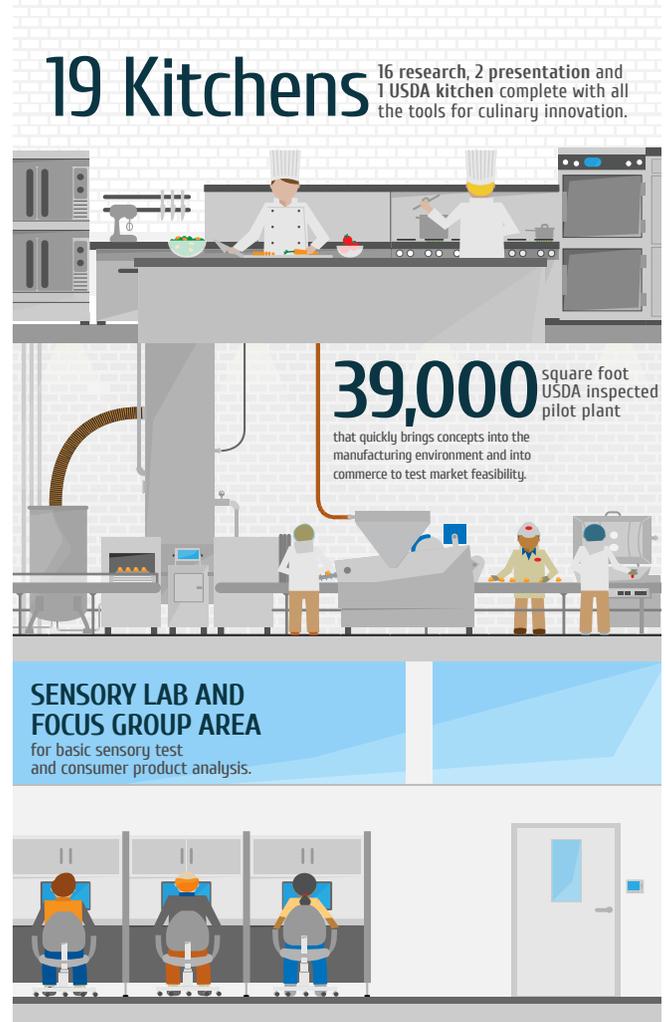
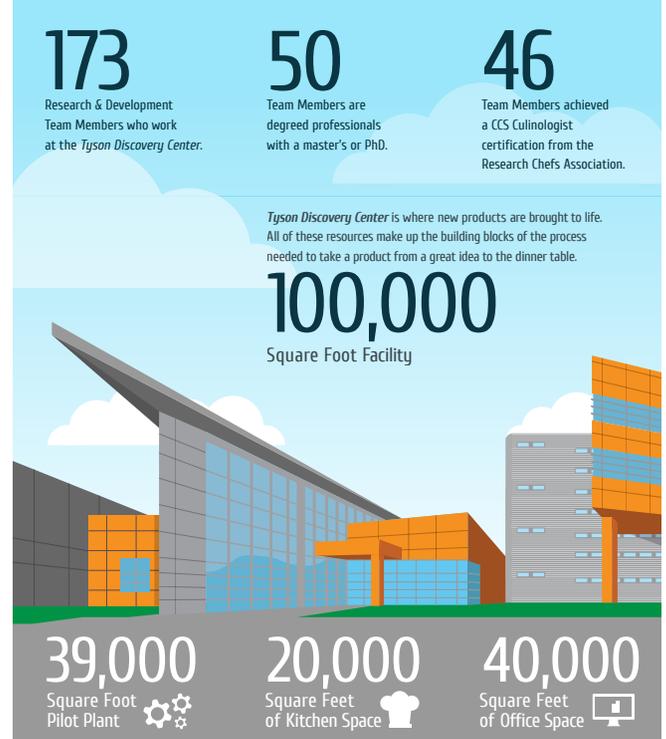
“The food produced in the pilot plant is USDA inspected and safe for human consumption, but is still in the innovation stage so it’s not ready for market,” Burlison said. “We’re able to reduce waste and help our community by donating much of the food that’s part of our development.”

## LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE

Staff at the center are also doing their part to promote the food and agriculture industries for years to come.

“Besides managing 450 active projects a year, we also host events that sculpt the future food growers and food manufacturers,” Wenrich said. “Through officer training with the FFA or the American Meat Science Association, we have had great success bringing young people here to mold them with industry and educational perspectives.”

To learn more about the *Tyson Discovery Center* visit [www.tysonfoods.com/innovation](http://www.tysonfoods.com/innovation).





The mission of the Arkansas Agriculture Department's State Plant Board (ASPB) is to protect and serve the citizens of Arkansas and the agricultural and business communities by providing information and unbiased enforcement of laws and regulations thus ensuring quality products and services.



## PESTS

The ASPB administers the "Arkansas Pest Control Law" issuing licenses for the control of crop and home pests

**The ASPB issues quarantines to control the spread of pests**

39 county Fire Ant quarantine area

33 county Emerald Ash Borer quarantine area



## CERTIFIED

**1,285**

certificates issued attesting that export products are free of pests, weeds and diseases

The Bureau of Standards protects the public by performing inspections and testing



## Weights & Measures

**1,451** motor fuel dispenser tests

**7,334** retail business inspections

**1,765** scale inspections



## SEED LAB

**15,726**

quality assurance tests on seeds for more than 60 crops

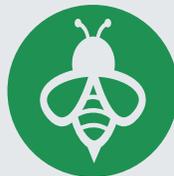


## PESTICIDE

Since 2005, the Agricultural Abandoned Pesticide Program has overseen the collection of

**3,646,397 lbs**

of unwanted pesticide in counties across Arkansas.



## APIARY

**2,500** registered beekeepers

**45,000** registered bee colonies

**100**

crops in US are pollinated by bees including many in Arkansas



## FERTILIZER

**1.1 million tons**

of fertilizer sold in Arkansas

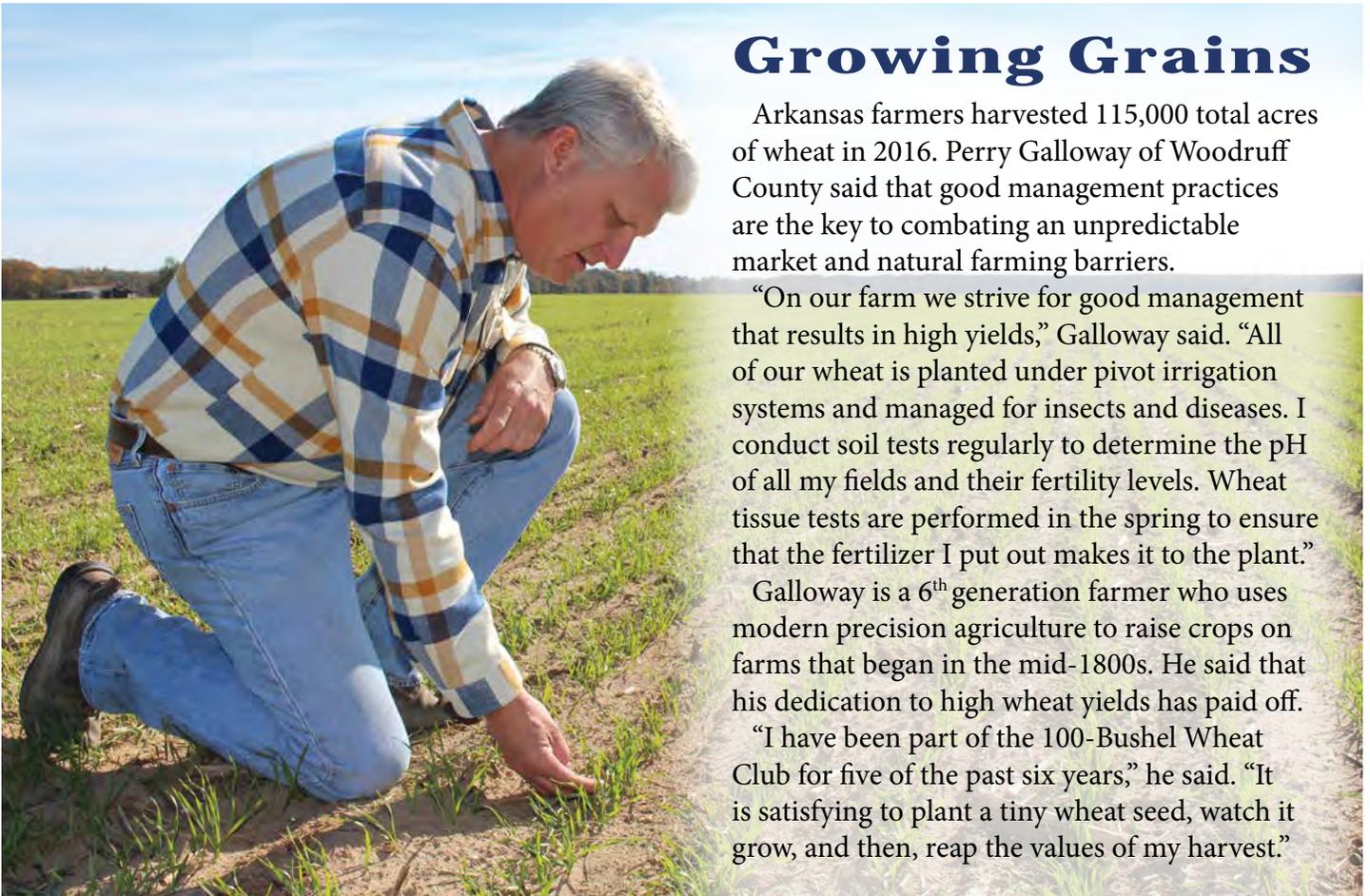
## Growing Grains

Arkansas farmers harvested 115,000 total acres of wheat in 2016. Perry Galloway of Woodruff County said that good management practices are the key to combating an unpredictable market and natural farming barriers.

“On our farm we strive for good management that results in high yields,” Galloway said. “All of our wheat is planted under pivot irrigation systems and managed for insects and diseases. I conduct soil tests regularly to determine the pH of all my fields and their fertility levels. Wheat tissue tests are performed in the spring to ensure that the fertilizer I put out makes it to the plant.”

Galloway is a 6<sup>th</sup> generation farmer who uses modern precision agriculture to raise crops on farms that began in the mid-1800s. He said that his dedication to high wheat yields has paid off.

“I have been part of the 100-Bushel Wheat Club for five of the past six years,” he said. “It is satisfying to plant a tiny wheat seed, watch it grow, and then, reap the values of my harvest.”



**Arkansas is ranked 16th in the nation for corn production.**

**745,000**

**Acres harvested**

**127,395,000**

**bushels produced**

**\$394,000,000**

**in value**



ARKANSAS  
AGRICULTURE  
DEPARTMENT



Source: USDA NASS 2017d; AFRC, 2017



# Sweet Sw

## Arkansas Sweet

**S**weet potato farmers in Arkansas are producing crops that are being sold in stores across the nation. For families like the Matthews in Wynne, raising sweet potatoes is a way of life. Terris Matthews with Matthews Ridgeview Farms said his family has been in the business for over 100 years.

“My dad farmed potatoes, his dad farmed potatoes and his dad farmed potatoes,” Matthews said. “I’m a 4<sup>th</sup> generation farmer and my daughters make the 5<sup>th</sup> generation.”

Matthews said that he is proud to carry on the family

legacy of raising high quality sweet potatoes through hands-on production.

“Matthews Ridgeview Farms is a branch off Matthews Brothers, which was my dad and his brother,” he said. “In 2007, my wife and I branched off to start our business. My dad is my best friend, he has been my partner and he has helped me all along the way.”

Besides family, the company also values the customers they serve.

“For me and my company we strive to treat people fair and take care of our customers in the best way that we can,” he said.



To meet customer demand, Matthews Ridgeview has developed working relationships with other producers to offer an organic product.

“In our business, the conventional sweet potato is what we have done for years,” Matthews said. “But we do have some customers who want the organics, so we developed a good working relationship with Shawn Peebles of Peebles Organic and it has been working out good for the both of us.”

Shawn Peebles said that while the organic sweet potatoes were a



# eet Treat

## *Potato Production*

new idea to both companies, they have seen sales rise.

“Matthews Ridgeview Farms had never sold organics and we had never raised organic sweet potatoes, so this has been a learning experience for both of us,” Peebles said. “Last year we planted 120 acres and sales were very strong. We have seen demand really grow for them and it’s becoming a very good crop for us, so we will likely expand our acreage even more next year.”

Peebles said that sweet potato production is extremely labor intensive and growing organics adds extra work to keep up with the regulations.

“Organic sweet potatoes, just like any organic product, are subject to strict oversight by the USDA and certifying agencies. They pull samples out of our field to randomly test during harvest and our water is tested in the plant and through the pivot systems. Every detail is monitored and checked,” Peebles said. “It takes about two people in an office working full time to keep the paperwork going. We are inspected once or twice a year by an organic inspector to make sure that organic integrity has been maintained.”

Organic sweet potato production is also more expensive Peebles said.

“It costs more to raise organic because we don’t use any herbicides and all the fungicides or insecticides we use are mainly biologicals. Also, to farm by USDA organic standards, you cannot farm a piece of ground unless it has been chemically clean for 36 months. Meaning we have to let our land lay with nothing being farmed on it to prep for organic production,” Peebles said.

Despite the higher price point, Peebles said they are in the perfect geological location to market their product.

“In Arkansas, we can ship anywhere in every direction because we are right on the edge of Memphis



*“Five Generations of  
Growing Excellence, Ten  
Years of Raising the Bar”*



Matthews Ridgeview Farms

**870-238-8828**

**2400 Bartlett Road  
Wynne, AR 72396**

*“We Define Sweet”*





Photo courtesy of Matthews Ridgeview Farms

which is the hub of the central United States,” Peebles said. “Not only can we ship in every direction cheaply, but we are also very competitive with a long growing season and excellent water. Those are the main ingredients needed to be successful in vegetable production.”

Matthews says the logistical shipping advantage is not the only thing propelling sales as the product is on the rise as a health food.

“We ship our product to most major retailers and grocery chains all through the state of Arkansas, into Tennessee, Texas, Kansas, Oklahoma and from Missouri all the way straight up into Canada,” Matthews said. “Overall sweet potatoes are on a rise. They are a health food full of beta carotene, vitamin C and D, iron, magnesium and other benefits, which are causing them to gain popularity.”

Both farms strive to raise the highest quality crop for their consumers and in doing so have helped promote the growing agriculture industry in Arkansas.

To learn more about the families behind the farms, visit [www.peeblesorganic.com](http://www.peeblesorganic.com) and [www.arsweetpotatoes.com](http://www.arsweetpotatoes.com).



**Peebles Organic**

*At Peebles Organic Farms, our mission is to bring the freshest, highest quality produce to our customers.*

**870-347-2044**

**[www.peeblesorganic.com](http://www.peeblesorganic.com)**

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# Hay Day Everyday

## *Commercial Hay Production on Shook Farms*

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**A**rkansas farmers harvest over 1.2 million acres of hay annually, creating an impact of \$247.32 million to the state's economy. One of those farmers that drives commercial hay production in the state is Arkansas native Larry Shook of Shook Farms.

Located in southern White County, Shook Farms consists of 1,700 acres that are used to raise wheat, corn silage, soybeans and beef cattle, but commercial hay production is the main focus of the operation.

"We have 800 acres of Bermuda grass for hay that we bale into small squares, big squares and round bales," Shook said. "We also have 350 acres of wheat that I primarily raise for straw."

Although he keeps some hay to feed his own cattle herd, Shook said he sells close to 100,000 square bales a year, in addition to 3-5,000 round bales. Shook said he was raised on a farm, but his hay business did not begin on the large scale it is today.

"In 1985 I started real small with 30 or 40 acres," he said. "We started out selling to a few local feed stores and over time expanded to furnishing hay for 25 feed stores statewide."

Hay production plays a crucial role in supporting other sectors of agriculture. The distribution of hay from Shook Farms demonstrates this. Aside from the Arkansas feed stores, Shook also supplies hay to local farmers, race horse trainers, fair livestock exhibitors, feedlot owners and niche market customers across the United States.

"During hay season I market in the field directly to several customers and I deliver to farms and horse stables in the central part

of the state," Shook said. "For the past five years or so I have been supplying hay to the Little Rock Zoo as well. Also, this year I sent about 1,000 round bales to cattle feedlots in Missouri," he said.

Some of Shook's customers travel great distances to acquire his product.

"I have a customer who bought my hay at a Professional Bull Riding event in Little Rock for his bucking bulls," Shook said. "Now he comes from Connecticut twice a year to buy square bales from me."

### **FAMILY MATTERS**

Shook partners with his son to utilize the hay that does not meet quality standards.

"My son Matt works with Total Erosion Control, an environmental construction business, and if I have any hay that goes bad, gets rained on or isn't as high quality, I sell it to him to blow on the sides of highways," Shook said.

The father-son team also partner together to manage their beef cattle herd of 180 cows. Shook said that farming is a passion of his whole family.

"Farming is a family business," Shook said. "My dad is 81 years old and he is still out here helping rake hay."

Larry's wife Belinda also helps on the farm when





she isn't at work as the Beebe School District Superintendent. Off the farm, Larry serves as a Captain with the North Little Rock Fire Department, where he has been for 35 years. In 2017, the family was awarded the White County Farm Family of the Year in recognition of their contribution to agriculture.

### LABOR OF LOVE

Aside from the family, Shook also has two full-time, year-round employees and four to five seasonal employees that help the farm operate successfully. He said the extra help is necessary to provide the intensive labor that is required for large scale hay production. On a typical day there are eight tractors running to get the hay teddered, raked, baled and loaded.

"There is a lot more labor involved in hay production than what people would think, and they don't realize you have to plan three days in advance during hay season for when to cut and bale" Shook said. "It takes a lot of equipment and a lot of help. Good quality hay also takes management of fungicide, insecticide and fertilizer."

Like other types of farming, hay production requires extensive planning, good management and the ability

to deal with things that are beyond control. Weather is the biggest management challenge for producers like Shook, but he said that Arkansas provides the ideal climate for his operation.

"We normally have enough rainfall to grow good Bermuda grass without having to irrigate it," he said. "For good quality Bermuda grass you are probably not going to find any better place to grow it."

During peak hay season, Shook said they harvest close to 30 acres every day, weather permitting. To ensure his hay is kept in optimal condition, Shook said he never leaves hay in the field when he calls it a night.

"Every night I make sure that I do not leave hay in the field," he said, "When I finish baling for the day, I make sure that it is brought in to the barn."

### QUALITY GUARANTEED

The most rewarding part of hay production is the end product, Shook said. He said he strives to put in the extra time and effort to guarantee customer satisfaction.

"It's all worth it seeing the finished product," Shook said. "I pride myself in having good quality hay. You can find hay cheaper, but you won't find it any better."



**PUT SOME RICE ON YOUR PLATE.**

Along with funding educational programs and scholarships for students planning a career in the agricultural or food industry, the Arkansas Rice license plate will assist the Arkansas Rice Council by showing Arkansas's continued support for one of the most important industries in the state.



To learn more or order your Arkansas Rice Council license plate, call 501.682.4692 or visit [www.dfa.arkansas.gov](http://www.dfa.arkansas.gov).

# Recover & Reuse Valuable Resources

*Arkansas rice farmers work to leave the land better than they found it*

**S**ustainability is a hot topic in the agriculture industry. Keith Watkins and his son Bradley of Griffithville have integrated ecological irrigation systems into their rice fields for that reason. They utilize a conservation practice known as **tail water recovery**, in which water runoff from a field's surface is collected and reused in the irrigation system.

Bradley Watkins described the efficient system that helps them conserve irrigation water and improve water quality, while reducing energy use.

"We start by picking water up out of the White River bottom," Bradley said. "As we irrigate our crops, the excess water runs off the fields into ditches that carry it to one of our seven recovery pits. Once in the pit, we pick up that water and either reuse it on our fields or store it in one of our four reservoirs. Not only are we able to reuse our available runoff water instead of having to pump up groundwater, but the pits also collect rainwater, which can be stored until we need it."

The concept of using fewer natural resources is not new to the Watkins family. Keith said they started farming in 1984 and have been constantly improving their practices to become a more sustainable operation. He said they are now close to their goal of using 100%

surface water in irrigation.

"I have been farming my whole life," Keith said. "It's all I have ever done. This is my 47<sup>th</sup> crop and we are all about sustainability. Not only is the system saving us money, but we are saving water in a Critical Groundwater Area. As a farmer, my goal is like the old saying: leave it better than you found it."

Keith said there are many benefits to tail water recovery systems that go beyond water conservation and saving money.

"These systems have an impact on the wildlife as well," Keith said. "Ducks use the collected water as a rest area and in the winter, we have seen as many as 13 bald eagles surrounding the reservoir."

Keith said that he believes it is the job of the farmers to help conserve natural resources and leave their land better for the next generation.

"Sustainability is the buzzword but, it is really just conservation. That is what we have been doing here for years. It helps the environment and it helps us too, because it saves us money," Keith said. "As farmers we are invested stewards of the land."

For more information about tail water recovery, visit [www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov).





# A Berry Good Thing

## *Arkansas Blackberry Research Has A National Impact*

**T**he University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Fruit Research Station in Clarksville is home to a blackberry breeding program that has gained national recognition. Dr. John R. Clark, Distinguished Professor of Horticulture at the University of Arkansas, said that there is a rich history of the breeding program that makes it successful today.

“The fruit breeding program started in 1964,” Clark said. “Dr. James N. Moore, who was a native of Arkansas, began the program. He had a big dream of improving a range of fruit crops for Arkansas growers.”

As part of the University of Arkansas System, the station was created to further the land grant mission of education, research and extension by providing a place for agriculture research to take place.

“There are research stations scattered around the state,” Clark said. “The biggest and oldest ones began

around 1928. In 1948, the university wanted to expand those and opened several more including the one in Johnson County.”

Clark said at that time, Johnson County had a large peach industry consisting of several thousand acres.

“The station was put here to provide education and technology for peach growers,” he said.

Clark said, over the years the research station diversified to working with other crops such as grapes, blackberries, nectarines, blueberries and apples to meet the needs of other growers.

“The station has now been here for 54 years and has produced thousands and thousands of hybridizations, grown hundreds of seedlings, and made thousands of selections that have resulted in well over 50 varieties of different fruits being produced,” he said. “We are fulfilling the land grant mission through

improved fruits that enhance our diets, increase grower profitability, and promote better health, while providing a more enjoyable eating experience.”

The station has had a significant impact on the global scale due to the blackberry breeding program.

“Our breeding program involves hybridizing plants with desirable traits,” Clark said. “We try to get all the desirable traits into one plant, which becomes the variety and it gets a name. It takes 10-20 years to develop a fruit variety from idea to product.”

In his 37 years with the University of Arkansas, Clark has seen several varieties of blackberries released that have impacted the global fruit industry.

“The original focus of the blackberry breeding program was to get thornless plants with increased fruit size, better taste and upright growing canes,” he said. “We have released a number of varieties including perhaps our most popular, Ouachita. Ouachita is an upright florican-fruiting, thornless blackberry of high quality. It gained popularity for its high yields, wide adaptation, storage ability and good taste.”

Clark said that Ouachita is only one of nearly 20 varieties that station has released since 1974.

“A newer piece of technology is primocane-fruiting. Normally a blackberry cane grows the first year, overwinters and the next year it flowers, dies and

then a new cane grows. That first-year cane is called a primocane and the second-year cane is florican,” Clark said. “Primocane-fruiting is a trait we have worked with for over 20 years, which allows a shift from just a summer crop into a fall crop. We have the

world’s first primocane-fruiting blackberries called the Prime-Ark® Series.”

Despite the intensive labor involved in specialty crop research, Clark said it pays off when a new variety is released.

“Plant breeding is the art and science of improving plants for the benefit of humankind,” he said. “The most exciting part is releasing a new variety and creating something people

benefit from. When I get feedback that a variety really worked for a grower and that they made money with it, the time it took to get there really pays off.”

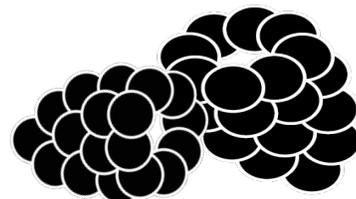
The blackberry breeding program has gained national attention through various awards and honors. Clark said the program is important to the state because it is innovating new products for Arkansas growers while also finding ways to help pay for itself.

“Each of the varieties released are patented and royalties are collected by the University of Arkansas” he said. “That money helps fund the program through a broader base of support from across the country.”

To learn more about the Fruit Research Station and its work in blackberries, visit [www.uaex.edu](http://www.uaex.edu).



**Arkansas is ranked 6<sup>th</sup> in the U.S. for acres harvested of Blackberries and Dewberries**



**Over  
300  
acres of  
Blackberries  
harvested in  
Arkansas each year**

**126  
Arkansas Farms  
producing Blackberries  
as of 2012**

Source: UAEX and USDA. For descriptions and information on licensed propagators of Arkansas-developed fruits, visit <https://www.uaex.edu/farm-ranch/crops-commercial-horticulture/horticulture/commercial-fruit-production/>



The mission of the Arkansas Agriculture Department's Forestry Commission (AFC) is to protect Arkansas's forests, and those who enjoy them, from wildland fire and natural hazards while promoting rural and urban forest health, stewardship, development, and conservation for all generations of Arkansans.



### TREES

**11.8 billion**

trees in Arkansas



### FORESTLAND

**19,000,000+ acres**

more than 57% of the state's land area



### ENFORCEMENT

**\$201,170.46**

recovered in restitution  
to landowners



### SUPPRESSED WILDFIRES

**1,566 wildfires burned 27,549 acres**



### TRAINING

**1,600**

volunteer firefighters  
trained in 2017



### LANDOWNER ASSISTS

**2,700**

landowners were assisted with  
forest management plans,  
and general forestry needs



### STEWARDSHIP

**1,244**

certified forest stewards

**281,691 acres**

maintained under the program

# Philanthropy in Forestry



*Log A Load for Kids program  
and the Ross Foundation  
make big community impacts*

**F**orestry is a major industry for Arkansas with a total economic impact of \$6.3 billion. Since 1978, Arkansas has added over one million acres of timberland. Today, with over half of the state's land covered in forest, it is no wonder that the 28,000 people employed directly by the industry are making a big impact. Forestry organizations are also going above and beyond to help communities across Arkansas. The Log A Load for Kids program and the Ross Foundation are leaving a lasting mark through their philanthropic efforts.

## **ARKANSAS LOG A LOAD FOR KIDS**

For 25 years, the **Arkansas Log A Load for Kids** program has been raising money for Arkansas Children's Hospital (ACH) through the combined efforts of the forestry industry and members of the community. Former Arkansas Forestry Association Communications Coordinator Rebecca Neely, who now works for ACH as a volunteer services coordinator, said the program started in South Carolina in 1988 with two loggers who wanted to help

their community. They developed the idea of selling a load of logs and donating the proceeds to the local hospital. She said the idea spread to other states and began in Arkansas in 1993.

"Since the program began here in 1993, loggers and members of the forestry community have demonstrated their commitment to Arkansas by raising more than \$9 million for Arkansas Children's Hospital at events throughout the state," Neely said.

Arkansas Log A Load For Kids consists of six chapters statewide that, when combined, have funded a \$4 million endowment in support of the Emergency Department and Trauma Unit at ACH, a \$1.5 million endowment in pediatric cardiovascular surgery, a \$1.5 million endowment in support of the Angel One helicopter transport program, as well as a \$1 million endowment for the hospital's imaging and radiation program. In 2017, Log A Load for Kids committed to raising \$1.5 million over two years to fund the cardio thoracic surgery endowment chair.

Arkansas Forestry Association Executive Vice President Max Braswell said the program is sponsored

by the **Arkansas Forestry Association** in cooperation with the **Arkansas Timber Producers Association**. Program coordinators across the state host events such as fish fry dinners, skeet shoots, golf tournaments and auctions to get the community involved.

“Log A Load is a grass-roots fundraising effort. These activities take place in small communities across Arkansas through the combined efforts of dedicated everyday people,” Braswell said. “Even during the toughest of economic times, Log A Load support has never wavered. Every dollar raised goes to the hospital and we know it makes a difference because we hear the personal testimonies. When that helicopter takes off, we know it’s flying because of Log A Load.”

Bobby Taylor has been involved in the family business, Shelby Taylor Trucking, for as long as he can remember. He said that everyone is part of a family in the forestry community. He got involved in Log A Load after touring the hospital when the program began.

“I knew I wanted to help when I met the dedicated ACH staff and saw kids smile despite their circumstances,” Taylor said. “Now as an event coordinator, I work to raise the most we can. We sell tables for catfish dinners and things like that, but I also like to go back to the tradition, so we go to landowners and get loads of logs donated. Each year we will auction off 16-18 loads to local sawmills. This year we averaged \$4,500 per load.”

David Lunsford has been working with Shelby Taylor Trucking since 1993. He said he is encouraged



*Photo courtesy of the Arkansas Forestry Association*



*Photo courtesy of the Arkansas Forestry Association*

by how the communities are being affected by the logging industry.

“I still remember my first hospital tour with Log A Load. I talked to a 6-year-old boy who had open heart surgery the day before and realized that’s who we are helping,” Lunsford said. “That impact can still be seen today. There’s a tradition that a baker in our community makes a specialty cake for the auction and after it’s sold, the cake is donated back to the hospital for them to enjoy. I have seen that cake sell for \$7,000 and all of that money goes to Arkansas Children’s Hospital.”

### **CHAMPIONS FOR CHILDREN**

Arkansas Children’s Foundation Director of Development Vanessa Delgadillo said every

**SILVICULTURAL SPECIALTIES  
HARVESTING**

**TIMBER EVALUATION  
CRUISING**



**870-942-1772  
staylortrucking.com**

dollar raised by Log A Load has a major impact.

“At Arkansas Children’s Hospital our mission is to champion children by making them better today and healthier tomorrow. Log A Load volunteers are true champions of children who help us do that,” she said. “We never turn a child away regardless of their ability to pay. Annually we give over \$20 million in charity care and that’s why Log A Load makes such a difference.”

Delgadillo said that Arkansas Log A Load volunteers have a heartwarming amount of commitment for helping fellow Arkansans.

“The Arkansas Log A Load chapters raise the most funds nationally, which speaks volumes about the volunteers and the generosity of the logging industry in Arkansas,” she said. “Log A Load is also one of the largest contributors to the Arkansas Children’s Hospital, second only to Walmart. They truly open up their arms and their pockets to make a change in their own community and beyond.”

Lee Anne Fitzgerald is a former ACH employee who now volunteers as an event

coordinator for Central Arkansas Log A Load. She said her goal is to give everyone the opportunity to give.

“It’s not just the big donors that make a difference, the little things add up,” Fitzgerald said. “Our events range from passing around a change donation bucket to auctioning off loads of logs. You don’t have to be in the logging industry to be a part of what we do.”

As a former ACH patient, Melanie Wells is now



*Photo courtesy of the  
Arkansas Forestry Association*

involved in the wood product hauling industry and coordinates events for the River Valley Log A Load chapter. She said everyone has a connection to ACH.

“You never know at what point you may need ACH. If you haven’t been there yourself, you probably know someone who has,” Wells said. “I’m very proud of what we have contributed, and I am 100% convinced that we have made a difference in children’s lives. I challenge other agriculture industries to follow the forestry example and join together to make a difference in the community by giving their time or money.”

## THE ROSS FOUNDATION

Located in Arkadelphia, the Ross Foundation manages timberlands for conservation purposes and administers philanthropic programs through the revenue produced by those timberlands. The foundation’s mission is to maintain charitable holdings of land and timber as exemplar forests through the use of management techniques which integrate the value of all forest resources, to allow public access to these forests for recreational uses as long as such use is not detrimental to the resource of the forest, and to generate revenue to fund its philanthropic program.

### A TRADITION OF GROWTH

Ross Foundation President and Chairman of the Board of Trustees Ross Whipple said the foundation has a long history of promoting community growth.

“The Ross Foundation was started in 1966 by my great aunt, Esther C. Ross and her daughter, Jane Ross,” Whipple said. “The initial endowment to the foundation was about 18,000 acres of timberland, which was part of Jane’s grandfather’s estate. It has grown since then to well over 62,000 acres today. As originally intended, the Ross Foundation continues to maintain productive, healthy forests while providing funding for projects that help Arkadelphia and Clark County grow.”

### ARKADELPHIA PROMISE

In 2010, the Ross Foundation and Southern Bank Corp. became equal partners in providing annual funds for a program called the Arkadelphia Promise. The Arkadelphia Promise helps provide financial assistance for college students from the area.

According to their website, “The Arkadelphia Promise makes a college education a reality for every child in Arkadelphia by



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removing the financial obstacle of a higher education. The goal of the Arkadelphia Promise Scholarship is to increase the college-going rate for local students, reduce the number of students dropping out of college for financial reasons and provide for a more educated workforce.”

Whipple said that the growth of the Ross Foundation affords them ways to develop their county by donating the majority of all income earned.

“As we grow the asset base over time, we have a greater opportunity to give back to the community through things like the Arkadelphia Promise,” Whipple said. “It is a great opportunity for these students to have the ability to obtain a four-year college education with little to no cost. I think one of the greatest things we can do is to educate young people and help them grow and develop, which is what this program does.”

Since 2011, the Arkadelphia Promise has awarded a total of \$1,822,069 in scholarships. Moving forward, Whipple said he would like to see this program draw more students into the Arkadelphia school system.

“The more students there are, means more people in the community, which creates more jobs and a larger tax base, so it’s all a win-win in the end,” he said.

Besides providing funding through the Arkadelphia Promise, the Ross Foundation also works directly with youth to teach about the industry. Director of Operations Mark Karnes said one of their main goals is to educate the public by bringing them to forest sites.

“We believe it is important to get good information to kids when they are young, so that they can grow up educated about the forest,” Karnes said. “We are involved with many organizations, from 4-H and Boy Scouts, to the Project Learning Tree and the Arkansas Forestry Association Education Foundation, as a way to teach about what we do in the industry.”

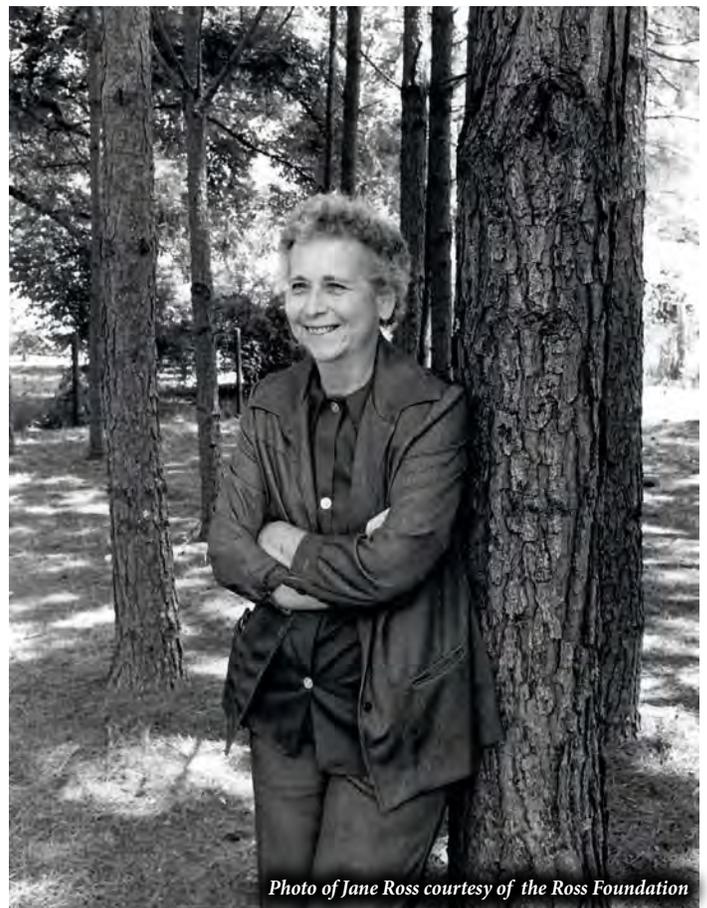
As they are integrated in the forestry industry, Whipple said their work relies on long-term land management to make it sustainable for the public.

“We have a responsibility to Esther and Jane Ross to manage the foundation in the way they wanted it done,” he said. “As stewards of the land, we try to live up to their goal of making Clark County a better place to live. After all, a properly managed forest can provide higher yields and ultimately more income, which means you can do more good with those dollars.”

For more information about how you can get involved in these programs, visit [www.arkforests.org/page/logload](http://www.arkforests.org/page/logload) and [www.rossfoundation.us](http://www.rossfoundation.us).



*Photo of Jane Ross courtesy of the Ross Foundation*



*Photo of Jane Ross courtesy of the Ross Foundation*

# Managing Arkansas's Natural Resources with Prescribed Fire

*Landowners and Agencies follow Voluntary Smoke Management Guidelines to Reduce Smoke Impact*





**P**rescribed fire is one of the most efficient and economical management tools for landowners and agencies involved with agriculture, forestry, and wildlife that are charged with managing our state's natural resources. Prescribed fire, also referred to as "prescribed burning" or "good fire" or "crop burning," is a strategically planned and carefully managed fire application used to accomplish specific management goals. Depending on the industry and area, prescribed fire has many different benefits.

"For forestry, the number one benefit of prescribed fire is protection from wildfire. Prescribed burning reduces the fuel load on the ground in our forests, making them less vulnerable to intense and fast-moving flames," State Forester Joe Fox said.

Prescribed fire is an excellent tool for forests and grasslands to improve wildlife habitat, especially for populations of white-tailed deer, turkey, and quail. Prescribed fire opens the seed bed for replanting, making seedling regeneration faster and more productive. An effective prescribed fire can accomplish vegetation control, making forests less dense. For this purpose a prescribed burn clears the forest floor of weeds and less hearty vegetation so that young trees have access to more sunlight and room to grow. Finally, prescribed fire also protects against attacks from insects and diseases by removing weakened or dying trees, making the entire forest less vulnerable to infestations and restoring a balance of nutrients.

"Arkansas forests and plant types are actually a result of natural fires that occurred for thousands of years before this area was settled," Arkansas Game & Fish Commission Habitat Coordinator

Martin Blaney said. "Our pine and oak forests all over the state were naturally managed by fire if they were above the flood plain. By using fire responsibly on these vegetative communities, we are helping to propagate forests and plant communities of the future."

Cropland also benefits from prescribed fire. Arkansas farmers use prescribed fire as a management tool for removing stubble following the harvest of row crops including rice, soybeans, cotton, wheat, corn and other crops.

"Field burning is part of a complete crop management strategy," Arkansas Rice Federation Chairman Jeff Rutledge said. "Crop burning reduces the carbon footprint and soil erosion potential by replacing the need for constant tilling between planting seasons. The application of fire is a natural way to clean and clear a field without equipment. It's also the best way to confidently remove the chances of pests and disease hurting your next crop."

## **VOLUNTARY SMOKE MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES**

As with all fire, prescribed fire generates smoke. **Voluntary Smoke Management Guidelines** were developed as a tool to help plan burns for days when smoke will cause the least amount of impact to others in an area.

The Arkansas Prescribed Fire Council developed Voluntary Smoke Management Guidelines over ten years ago for forest landowners and forest industry professionals. This group represents a collaboration of private, state and federal agencies in forestry and conservation including the Arkansas Agriculture Department's Forestry Commission, Arkansas Game & Fish Commission, The Nature Conservancy,

Arkansas Forestry Association, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Arkansas State Parks, U.S. Forest Service, Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission, and others.

The guidelines are based on data from the U.S. Forest Service regarding smoke generated by burning in different forest types and from the size of an area to be burned. Guidelines are also based on data from the Environmental Protection Agency and the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality that identify standards for good air quality. The cornerstone of Voluntary Smoke Management Guidelines is a prescribed burn plan.

“Anytime we use prescribed fire, we create a burn plan,” White County Forester Bryan Aday said. “The atmospheric conditions dictate how well the smoke lifts. You can have a really good day, but if atmospheric conditions aren’t right, you run the risk of putting smoke where you don’t want it.”

Another version of Voluntary Smoke Management Guidelines was developed recently by a Crop Burning Task Force, which established a similar set of guidelines for farmers who also use prescribed fire as a management tool. The task force included

representation from the Arkansas Rice Federation, Ag Council of Arkansas, Arkansas Farm Bureau Federation and Arkansas Soybean Association, as well as input from the Arkansas Agriculture Department, University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture and Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality.

“This has been a collaborative effort from the entire agriculture industry. Our goal is to use prescribed fire for farmland and forestland in a way that causes as little inconvenience as possible to the public,” Arkansas Rice Federation Director Lauren Ward said. “The row crop industry took a working solution from the forest industry, and with input from the Prescribed Fire Council, has developed voluntary guidelines that help accomplish this goal while continuing to steward our natural resources sustainably and responsibly.”

## MANAGING SMOKE THROUGH PLANNING AND CONSISTENCY

Developing a burn plan for prescribed fire is a simple process. Guidelines include basic steps such as: checking weather conditions for humidity as well as wind speed and direction; checking the proximity of nearby smoke sensitive areas like schools, nursing homes, and highways; and reporting the burn to the Arkansas Agriculture Department Dispatch Center (1-800-830-8015). Reporting the burn to the Dispatch



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“Prescribed fire is such an important resource tool. It’s really one of the most important tools we are using on the landscape today.”

~ Martin Blaney

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# BEFORE YOU BURN Complete a Safe Burning Checklist

Check (X) and burn **ONLY** if all items are addressed:

- Take extra precautions for smoke sensitive areas and ensure they are not threatened (highways, residents, communities, etc.)
- Make official notifications to the AAD Dispatch Center at 1-800-830-8015
- Check to be sure relative humidity is above 20%
- Check to make sure wind speed is less than 15 mph
- Be sure to follow appropriate Smoke Category Day guidelines

Center helps to provide a full understanding of current weather conditions, information about other burns in the area, and to provide notice to the public by having the burn added to a list of reported prescribed burns.

“As farmers, we want to ensure the continued high quality of the air our families and neighbors breathe,” Rutledge said. “By completing a few simple steps, we can do a better job of that. A voluntary approach to smoke management will also help prevent legislative action and additional regulations for Arkansas growers. It is now our job as an industry and as farmers to actually implement the program and utilize the dispatch center.”

By calling the Dispatch Center, landowners may be advised against burning due to weather conditions or because too many others are already burning on

a given day. Dispatchers remain in contact with the National Weather Service who provide daily fire weather forecasts and can quickly provide data to identify whether smoke will disperse from areas quickly or linger.

“Prescribed fire is such an important resource tool. It’s really one of the most important tools we are using on the landscape today,” Blaney said.

Voluntary Smoke Management Guidelines are available to any Arkansas landowner or producer who is responsible for managing natural resources. Through science, collaboration, and a dedication from Arkansans to keep our landscape and air quality healthy, prescribed fire will be used for many years to come as a valuable management tool.

~ Story by Adriane Barnes

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# To Make The Best Better



## Arkansas 4-H Governor's Award Winners leave lasting mark

Arkansas 4-H is an organization that builds leaders and provides a positive outlook for future generations. The youth development program is conducted by the Cooperative Extension Service, part of the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, and consists of 123,891 Arkansas youth in more than 807 clubs statewide. 4-H members ranging from ages 5 to 19 “learn by doing” in an environment that promotes life skills development, networking, community service and hands-on learning. From Leadership and Animal Science to Food Preservation and Robotics, 4-H projects are designed to be fun and educational for any interest area.

In 1983, the Arkansas 4-H Governor's Award was established to recognize one outstanding Arkansas 4-H member each year. This award is the highest honor a member can receive in the state and is based on their leadership, citizenship, community service, 4-H project work and overall contributions to the 4-H program.

For more information about 4-H, contact your county extension office or visit [www.uaex.edu/4h-youth](http://www.uaex.edu/4h-youth).



**Stephanie Williams**  
*2017 Recipient*

In her 14 years involved in 4-H, Stephanie Williams had a passion for exhibiting horses and livestock. As she competed from the county to the

national level, her experiences allowed her to travel the U.S. and meet new people. Her goal in 4-H was to be a positive role model to those she taught at workshops, day camps and at events statewide. With a main project in foods and nutrition, she was able to help her family launch a cookbook with their award-winning recipes and 4-H project information. Today, she is in nursing school at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences and mentors 4-H livestock exhibitors.

“4-H is the best thing to ever happen to me,” Stephanie said. “It gave me opportunities that many people don’t get. 4-H teaches life lessons, hard work and an understanding of where our food comes from.”

**Joshua Lockhart**  
*2015 Recipient*

At age 12, Joshua Lockhart joined 4-H and quickly became very involved. His ability to elicit leadership in others allowed him to serve on

the National Leadership Team for the National 4-H Congress. He said planning an event of that scale showed him that 4-H is a global organization that impacts people’s lives. He also pursues his passion of serving people through his poultry project, which led him to the University of Arkansas, where he currently studies Poultry Science. Recently, for an internship he traveled to Africa, where he taught people how to raise birds for themselves and their community.

“4-H allows you to grow into an individual that will contribute back to society,” Joshua said. “It solidifies adults by building characteristics in youth such as leadership, service and self-sufficiency.”





**Meredith Williams**  
2014 Recipient

Until her 19<sup>th</sup> birthday, Meredith Vigneaux (Williams) was always very active in 4-H. She said it provided her with the skill set to not

only be a positive influence and beneficial member of society, but also to empower those around her. Her main project in foods and nutrition led to a television segment with her family for KATV's 'Cooking with the Williams.' She said her 4-H leaders supported her and she couldn't imagine another organization that cares for the whole individual like 4-H. Currently, she lives in Missouri, and will graduate in May of 2019 with her Doctor of Pharmacy degree.

"4-H is founded upon fostering an individual to not only learn, but to do," Meredith said. "To put it bluntly, it is the only organization where you can learn how an animal is raised, shown, slaughtered, cooked, served, and then if you have overeaten, how to work it off."



**Janeé Shofner**  
2013 Recipient

As a 3<sup>rd</sup> generation 4-H member, Janeé Parker (Shofner) said she was born into it and was taken to 4-H camps at a few months

old. She said 4-H allows youth to build social skills by connecting with people that share a desire to learn and make the best better. She made a local impact by volunteering at the Salvation Army where she would make and serve dinner while meeting the people she was helping. On a national level, she was active in many conferences and competitions such as the Food Bowl Team, which inspired her passion for food safety. She now works as a Food Technologist at McKee Foods.

"4-H is the best youth development organization that any child could ever be a part of," Janeé said.

"It provides life skills that are not taught in school."

**START SHAPING THE FUTURE NOW.**



Help create the next generation of leaders and doers with a donation to the Arkansas 4-H Foundation.



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**Rachel Eaton**  
2012 Recipient

Rachel Smith (Eaton) first heard about 4-H when her homeschool group decided to form a 4-H club. It didn't take long before she was



hooked on educating and inspiring others. Her main project work in leadership and community service allowed her to lead by example and serve others nationwide. She said through 4-H, she found a family in her lifelong friends and the confidence to achieve her goals. Using her love for children, her passion for stories and the skill set developed in 4-H, she is now a children's librarian at the Fayetteville Public Library.

"I really love 4-H because although it is competitive, everyone is supportive and encouraging, which allows you to be yourself," Rachel said. "In 4-H, kids gain confidence in themselves and their abilities while doing what they enjoy. Anyone can find their niche in 4-H."



**Cody Griffin**  
2011 Recipient

Since he was 5-years-old, Cody Griffin has been involved in 4-H with leadership and livestock activities. During his time as an Arkansas 4-H

State Officer it was his goal to promote 4-H. Even while attending the Citizenship Washington Focus (CWF) trip in Washington D.C., he visited a local school to talk about 4-H. He said he wants to provide other kids with the opportunities he had growing up in 4-H. He graduated college debt free due to his prizes from livestock projects and scholarships. 4-H also led to his current job as Staff Chair and Cooperative Extension Agent in St. Francis County, where he still works with 4-H. "Being in 4-H makes you well-rounded with a range of skills that better equip you for college and the workforce," Cody said.

**Dustin Dixon**  
2010 Recipient

Dustin Dixon started showing livestock at age 2 and officially joined when he turned 5. With his plant and soil science project and a passion for

helping others, he started a community garden that helped thousands of people by providing vegetables and information on healthy eating to those in need. At age nine, he set a goal to become a state officer. After years of stepping outside his comfort zone and growing as a leader, he served two years on the state officer team. In 2014, he graduated from the University of Arkansas with a poultry science degree and went to work for Cal-Maine Foods, as a Processing Manager. "4-H is a great opportunity to get involved," Dustin said. "It grows young people and teaches them to take initiative as adults."



*Photos courtesy of University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service*



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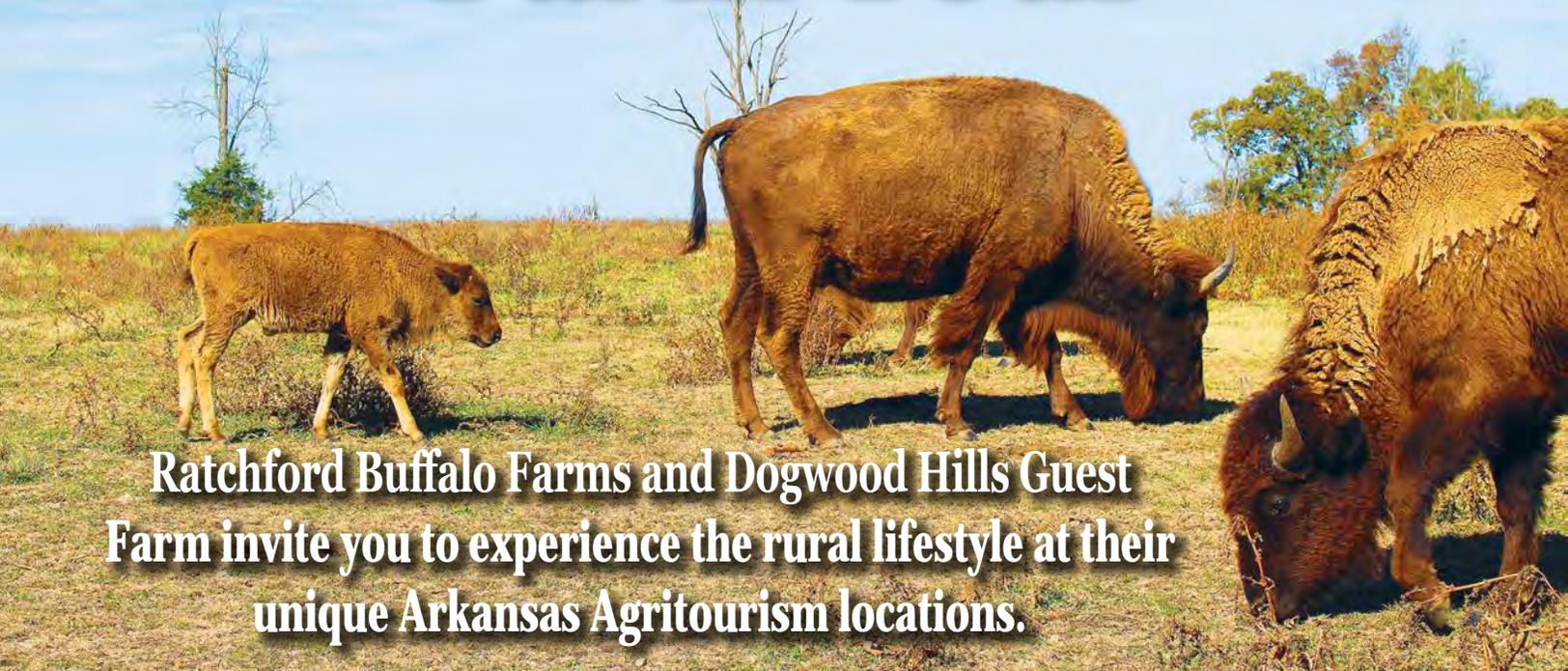
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# America's Heartbeat Farm Tour



Ratchford Buffalo Farms and Dogwood Hills Guest Farm invite you to experience the rural lifestyle at their unique Arkansas Agritourism locations.

Imagine waking up and looking out the window to see a herd of buffalo grazing only feet away or hearing a rooster crow telling you it's time to get up and milk the cows. It may sound like the life of someone else back in time, but with the agritourism opportunities at **Ratchford Buffalo Farms** and **Dogwood Hills Guest Farm**, these could be the sights and sounds you wake up to. The two farms, located in the Ozark Mountains, together created a tour called America's Heartbeat Farm Tour. The partnership allows them to draw in guests from across the nation in a joint-effort by offering support and group visits to both locations.

According to the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service, "Agritourism is any activity, enterprise or business combining elements of agriculture and tourism. Frequently, agritourism provides educational or recreational experiences. It offers visitors something to see, something to do or something to buy."

Agritourism allows farmers to raise awareness of and appreciation for agricultural production by connecting with the general population. In addition, agritourism

contributes to local communities by bringing visitors to small towns. While Ratchford Buffalo Farms and Dogwood Hills Guest Farm differ in operation, both share a common goal of educating by allowing visitors to experience farm life.

## RATCHFORD BUFFALO FARMS

In the early 1950's Otis and Madge Ratchford began the farm that is now known as "Ratchford Buffalo Farms." Their son, L.C. Ratchford, said the farm dates back to many years before buffalo roamed the fields.

"The Ratchford family came into this area after the Civil War. After my dad got back from World War II, he and my mom got married and bought this farm to raise strawberries," L.C. said. "It was a sustainable operation that diversified to tomatoes, cattle and feeder pigs. They also raised six kids and a big garden here."

Madge said being part of the family farm has always meant work, but it is something she enjoys.

"I have tied out the hay when we baled it, built fence, picked strawberries, canned food and worked cows," Madge said. "After my husband passed away in 1986, I wanted to still have a garden. So, I would plow the land




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with our donkey, Lucky, as my daughter led him.”

About 20 years ago, L.C. got into the buffalo business.

“I saw a television special on raising buffalo in high school and knew that was something I wanted to do,” L.C. said. “After I graduated Marshall High School in 1984, I went to school in Harrison to get a welding degree. My years as a welder came in handy when I got my first buffalo because building the pipe fence was the hardest part of getting into the business.”

Today guests can stay at the cabin on Ratchford Buffalo Farms, tour the growing buffalo herd and meet other animals.

“We still have about 100 head of cattle and we are up to 50 buffalo,” L.C. said. “We also have potbellied pigs, Guineas, peacocks, emus, a llama, an alpaca, deer and a Scottish Highlander. Most of the exotic animals were rescued from people who



got them and couldn't care for them.”

In the first few years of raising buffalo, L.C. said they sold meat to restaurants and online. Soon after, they developed a variety of snack sticks, which they sell across the region. “Our snack sticks are a hit,” L.C. said. “We sell them to about 350 locations in Arkansas and Missouri including state and national parks, the Arkansas State Capitol and health food stores.”

While marketing his buffalo meat, L.C. also began agritourism efforts.

“In the beginning we would have store managers come out and see where the meat comes from. Allowing them to come see it themselves is far more effective than anything I could ever say through advertising,” L.C. said. “We would

also invite the locals out to the farm and it just grew from there. I encourage people to come out and see



*Madge and L.C. Ratchford*

animal provides more challenges but L.C. said he is committed to his work.

“I don’t consider raising buffalo a job, it’s a way of life,” L.C. said. “Living on a farm is not your typical 40-hour work week and you don’t get days off. With buffalo, it is even more labor intensive and a committed endeavor, but I plan on doing it for a long time. Buffalo simply have an aura and a presence about them that is unparalleled.”

L.C. and his mother Madge both advocate

where and how their food is raised. We take pride in having a low stress environment for our animals.”

People now come from all over to see the magnificent animals and learn about how they are raised.

“We have people come from all over the world to visit. I’ve had guests from Australia, China, Japan, Italy, Germany, France and Lithuania,” L.C. said. “I enjoy showing people our lifestyle, whether to an individual or school group that is coming to tour the farm.”

L.C. said he hopes to keep history alive by letting people see the creatures he is passionate about.

“Buffalo are very majestic creatures and when you read in a history book about millions of them roaming the plains, it’s hard to understand how they were driven almost to extinction. I like to think that I am helping to preserve that by having my herd and letting people come learn about them,” L.C. said. “A lot of people don’t know that buffalo are not domesticated and still have all the instincts for survival. They travel as a herd and can even swim up to 20 miles.”

Farming has its hardships, and raising a wild

for the health advantages of buffalo meat.

“Buffalo is a lean meat that is low in fat, calories and cholesterol,” L.C. said. “It’s high in iron and potassium.”

“People always ask me for my chili recipe that I make with buffalo meat,” Madge said. “The meat is lean and heart healthy, with very little grease or oil.”

In 2017, L.C. became part of the initial committee for the new Arkansas Agritourism Association, which allows him to build new relationships within the industry.

“Agritourism is a growing industry as people want to stay closer to home for vacations. In doing so, they are discovering some of the hidden treasures within the state,” L.C. said. “Being on the Agritourism Committee lets me work together with people who are operating tourist destinations. I already had a good working relationship with the association’s president, Ruth Pepler with Dogwood Hills Guest Farm. Her farm is located just down the road and we came together for the America’s Heartbeat Farm Tour, which brings guests to both our farms.”

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“Agritourism is a growing industry as people want to stay closer to home for vacations. In doing so, they are discovering some of the hidden treasures within the state.”

~ L.C. Ratchford

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“The most rewarding part of agritourism is seeing the transition of kids and families who didn’t know about agriculture as they learn and begin to gain appreciation of the work we do on the farm.”

~ Grace Pepler

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### DOGWOOD HILLS GUEST FARM

Arkansas Agritourism Association President Ruth Pepler said Dogwood Hills Guest Farm was designed around the idea of agritourism.

“We moved here from New Jersey 10 years ago with about a dozen of our show chickens and a few goats,” she said. “Shortly after we moved in, we bought the guest house and opened it up to allow families to get away and enjoy life on the farm. We are not a production farm; everything on the farm was built with agritourism in mind.”

With education as a primary focus rather than production, Ruth said the farm is run quite differently.

“In the beginning, we had a dairy cow that we would milk, but people wanted to help, so we started looking at different options for people to safely stay on the farm and participate in the daily activities,” she said. “We began working on making visitor friendly pens and a milking stand that was visible, but would keep guests out of the kick zone. Our first concern is safety, second is visibility and third is function.”

Ruth’s daughter Grace said they even raise their animals in a non-conventional way.

“My dad always told me growing up, that all the animals on the farm had to have a purpose, so I quickly switched from beef to dairy cows,” Grace said. “When I was 12, I took out a loan and bought four dairy cows for my 4-H project. Someone told me that I couldn’t raise dairy cows on the amount of pasture we had here. I said ‘watch me’ and we

started hydroponically growing barley grasses using a fodder system to feed them.”

That fodder system is now housed in a 48 foot trailer and feeds several animals on the farm.

“Using the fodder system to grow feed works well because it’s high in nutrient content and increases the butter content in the cow’s milk,” Grace said. “I grow up to 300 pounds of fodder a day, which takes care of cows with some left over for the other farm animals.”

Ruth said they run things differently than larger operations, but their farm still gives people a better understanding of agriculture.

“Many people that come here know nothing about animals or agriculture,” she said. “There are a lot of farmers that are working their tails off every day doing different types of practices to produce food. But people don’t understand where that food comes from, so we try to give them an idea of all the prep work that goes into say, a gallon of milk, so then they see that there



*Grace and Ruth Pepler*

is a whole lot more that goes into their food than just picking it up at the grocery store.”

The Pepler family uses several ways to bring people to rural Arkansas and engage them in a memorable farm experience.

“We offer a farm stay, which allows families to connect, unplug and unwind from the everyday hustle and bustle,” Ruth said. “They can come help with the chores, meet the animals, walk through the high tunnel greenhouse, enjoy fresh-off-the-farm healthy country cooking and get a hands-on look inside rural America. We also have Sunday potlucks that are open to the community, group tours, cast iron cook-offs, monthly farm to table dinners and homestead days.”

Ruth said agritourism is not just about them on the farm, it’s about the effect they have on the community.

“Agritourism isn’t competitive, it’s a complementary industry,” Ruth said. “Regardless of what type of farm it is, it brings in people from outside of our county,

which has a huge ripple effect. This is not like looking at pictures in a museum; it’s bringing your muck boots and getting your hands dirty. It’s our job to provide an enjoyable and educational experience, so that people will come back to Arkansas.”

Even at a young age, Grace has taken her agriculture leadership skills from 4-H and applied them to making a difference via agritourism.

“The most rewarding part of agritourism is seeing the transition of kids and families who didn’t know about agriculture as they learn and begin to gain appreciation of the work we do on the farm,” Grace said. “It’s amazing to see a child,

who was terrified of animals, spend time here and leave wrapping their arms around big Great Pyrenees dogs, petting goats and touching chickens.

To schedule your visit to Ratchford Buffalo Farms email [ratchfordfarms@yahoo.com](mailto:ratchfordfarms@yahoo.com) or to plan your stay at Dogwood Hills Guest Farm visit [www.thefarmex.com](http://www.thefarmex.com). To set up a group tour contact Ruth at **870-448-4870**.



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- In 2016 1 billion broilers were raised in the state of Arkansas.
- The broiler industry and its employees pay about \$907.7 million in state and local taxes.
- Arkansas ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> in the nation for turkey production.
- In 2016, 525 million pounds of turkey was produced in the state of Arkansas.
- The turkey industry and its employees pay approximately \$78.2 million in state and local taxes.
- Arkansas ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> in the nation for egg production value.
- The egg industry and its employees pay approximately \$4 million in state and local taxes.

*The* POULTRY FEDERATION

# 3 + 1 = 2 Degrees

## *Benefits of Poultry Science Transfer Degree Program Add Up for College Students*

**T**hrough a new partnership between the **Dale Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences at the University of Arkansas** (U of A) and the **College of Agriculture, Engineering, and Technology at Arkansas State University** (A-State), students have an opportunity to earn two bachelor's degrees in four years. The **3+1 Poultry Science Transfer Degree Program** allows students to complete their first three years of study at A-State in Jonesboro studying animal science and then their final year at the U of A in Fayetteville specializing in poultry science, earning degrees from both institutions upon graduation. The program gives students double the benefit for their investment and helps fill an industry need for more poultry science graduates. As the first student to go through the program, Makenly Coles said it all adds up in the students' favor.

"It's hard to beat two bachelor's degrees from two different institutions in four years for one amount of money," she said.

Coles said the dual degrees help set her apart from her classmates as she is more well-rounded with foundational knowledge and specialized training.

"The fact that I have two degrees, one with a broad

background in all animal science and one specialized in poultry, gives me the opportunity to work within the poultry industry or at a diversified protein company" she said.

### **UNIFIED UNIVERSITIES**

Dr. Timothy Burcham, dean of the college of Agriculture, Engineering & Technology at A-State, said that the program is exceptional in the fact that two major universities have collaborated to utilize their strengths for the benefit of the students. Burcham said A-State has a great general animal science program and the U of A has a strong poultry science program, which makes the partnership very effective.

"This partnership leverages great resources at both institutions and that's the beauty of this program," Burcham said. "They get a great background here on a lot of different species. Our teaching farm gives students hands on experience with equine, cattle, goats, sheep, swine and even exotics in our petting zoo, but no avian exposure. This is where the puzzle pieces come together perfectly between the two universities."

In creation of the program, Burcham said common ground was easy to find between the two universities.

"We tore down barriers and worked together from

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"It's hard to beat two bachelor's degrees from two different institutions in four years for one amount of money"

~ Makenly Coles

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the Chancellor down to make this program happen,” he said. “There was absolute cooperation and a willingness from both institutions to do our best in serving the Arkansas poultry industry.”

### INDUSTRY PARTNERS

In the planning process, Dr. Bud Kennedy, associate dean of the Agriculture College at A-State, said that student cost was a big concern.

“We spent lots of time working out details to make the curriculum and transfer seamless. Still the transition would be difficult without transferable scholarships,” Kennedy said. “The poultry industry has come through on that part by providing scholarships to build the financial bridge from here to there.”

Burcham said the program gives students a leg up as leaders in the poultry industry for years to come.

“The program is more like getting a master’s degree regarding the student’s industry preparation. We take pride in having our students graduate as industry ready leaders,” he said. “Students like Makenly Coles are ready to hit the ground running for any of the poultry companies in Arkansas.”

### UNPARALLELED EXPERIENCE

As she nears graduation, Coles said the experience has better prepared her in the classroom.

“At first the thought of moving so far from home was scary, but the experience was worth it,” Coles said. “The program requires an internship, and that is the best thing I could have done for myself. There were times in class I would have been lost if I hadn’t done my summer internship.”

From the administrative standpoint, Burcham said experiencing two college cultures and learning about the state is unparalleled for a four-year degree.

“It’s one thing to experience the Red Wolf pack pride here at A-State then transition to calling the Hogs in the SEC at Fayetteville, but think about what that does for a student’s understanding of our state and our resources,” Burcham said. “To move from the flat plains of the delta to the rolling hills in the northwest corner of the state provides our students with great perspective of the richness and diversity of agriculture that we have in Arkansas.”

To learn more about this, and similar programs with other universities, visit [www.uark.edu](http://www.uark.edu).





## Moms On The Farm Tour Provides Hands-On Education

Many Americans are three generations removed from the farm, but a unique Arkansas program is giving consumers the opportunity to go beyond the grocery store to see where their food comes from. Started in 2012, Moms on the Farm is a free, hands-on educational tour that allows the general public to learn about production agriculture by visiting farms and meeting the families that run them.

University of Arkansas Meat Scientist Janeal Yancey was one of the founders of the program. She said the purpose of the tour is to put a face on production agriculture and connect people with credible sources that they can go to with questions or concerns.

“Over 90% of the farms in the U.S. that raise the food we buy in grocery stores, restaurants or farmers markets are family farms,” Yancey said. “These are folks trying to make a living by growing a wholesome, healthy product that they can be proud of. Food doesn’t come from a store; it comes from a farmer who worked very hard to get it to you. This tour is about getting the question askers with the answerers.”

Each year the tour alternates between Benton and Washington County and allows attendees to visit local dairy, beef and poultry farms. This year, the tour included a look inside Anglin Dairy near Bentonville,

chicken houses at Smith broiler farm and the beef cattle operation at Greenlawn Farm in Decatur. The tour concluded with a cooking demonstration by the Arkansas CattleWomen and an opportunity for open discussion and questions.

Susan and Ryan Anglin with Anglin Dairy have been involved with the program since it began. Susan said the tour allows people to experience the farm personally and talk to the farmer directly.

“We have an open barn door policy with no question I won’t answer,” Susan said. “The most asked question is about antibiotics in milk. Milk is one of the most highly tested and regulated foods. I am happy to clarify misconceptions about milk and agriculture in general.”

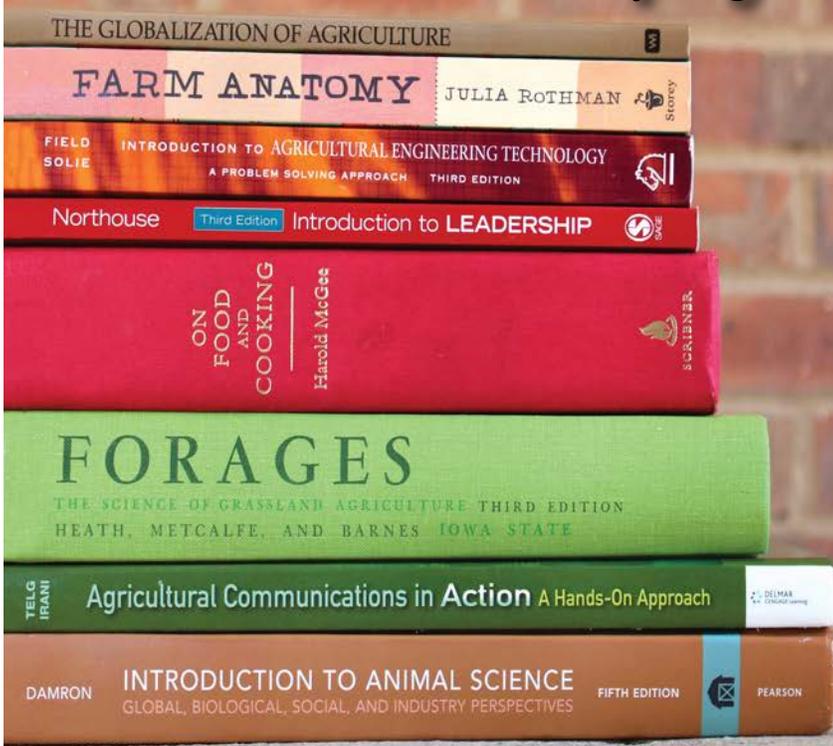
Attendee Jeannie Hornsby said she encourages young women to take part in this applied learning experience.

“I recommend that every young mother or young housewife goes on this tour when she starts buying food for her family,” Hornsby said. “We show you where the food comes from and ways to cook it.”

This program is made possible by the University of Arkansas Systems Division of Agriculture and the Arkansas CattleWomen’s Association. To find out how to get involved in future tours, contact Janeal Yancey at [jws09@uark.edu](mailto:jws09@uark.edu).



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A photograph of four women standing in a field of tall, golden grass. They are engaged in conversation. The woman on the far left is wearing a red t-shirt with the text 'KEEP CALM AND FARM ON'. The other women are wearing a black shirt, a pink shirt, and a blue button-down shirt.

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