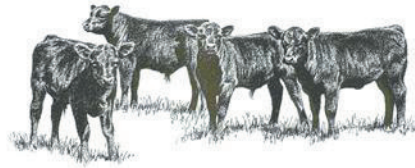




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## NEWS

Fall 2009

Volume 3 Issue 3

## First Annual RIRLA Farm Supper

The Rhode Island Raised Livestock Association (RIRLA) is very pleased to report on the tremendous success of its First Annual Farm Supper, held Saturday, November 7 at the West Greenwich Fire Station in West Greenwich, RI. RIRLA raised over \$7,000 at its first fundraising event ever!

Tickets for the dinner sold out and over 150 people – both farmers and the general public – came out to support RIRLA. The evening started with appetizers, including grilled kielbasa and hot dogs donated by RIRLA members. People milled, chatted and looked over the silent auction items which included: a Conanicut Island “Napper” wool blanket, an original “farm scene” oil painting, a sheepskin, two cases of wine (Greenvale Vineyards and Newport Vineyards), 500 lbs. of livestock feed, restaurant gift certificates, a free-range Thanksgiving turkey and much more.

Dinner (which was delicious) included boneless pork loin and roast beef. After dinner the silent auction winners were announced. Many, many thanks to the numerous people who helped to make this event the great success that it was. Special thanks to Nonie O’Farrell (Chair of the Farm Supper), Jane Christopher and Chris Ulrich, Will Wright, Chief Wayne and the crew at the West Greenwich Fire Station. Thank you to our Super Prime and Prime sponsors: Aquidneck Farms, Farm Family Insurance, Westerly Packing, and RI Beef & Veal as well as all our other generous sponsors. Thank you also to all who donated items for the silent auction. Please see the accompanying list on page 13.

Supporting the RI Raised Livestock



*Members and supporters enjoying a fine meal and good company at the first annual RIRLA Farm Supper.*

Association means farmer members are able to bring in more income to their family farms, helping them to stay on the farm and keep farming. In addition RIRLA offers many additional benefits to its members including trainings, networking and other educational events for farmers, technical assistance, grain discounts, quarterly newsletter, website and more.

Farmers, however, are not the only ones who benefit from the work of the RI Raised Livestock Association. The state and the general public also “profit”:

- Over \$400,000 added annually to Rhode Island’s economy
- The local food infrastructure is strengthened, improving access to local,

sustainably-produced meat and meat products

- Working farms preserve Rhode Island’s rural culture and history and protect valuable open space
  - Increased income and production capacity means that Rhode Island’s family-owned farms stay in business
- The profits realized from this event will go a long way toward furthering the goals of the Rhode Island Raised Livestock Association.

Thanks again to everyone who provided support for the Farm Supper. See you next year!

# A Report from the Director of RIRLA, Kim Zieglmayer



**G**reetings to all RI Raised Livestock Association members and all the other folks that have an interest in the work of RIRLA. We are now well into the fall season and hopefully you are winding up work on the farm and getting a chance to wind down a bit as winter approaches.

Two big and important events took place in November. The first was RIRLA's 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Farm Supper on Saturday, November 7. The second was the Large Animal Veterinarian meeting on Wednesday, November 18. Both events were GREAT successes! Please see the article on Page 1 for more details on the Farm Supper. Please see the article on Page 15 for a report on the Large Animal Veterinarian meeting.

The RIRLA website [www.rirla.org](http://www.rirla.org) is now in the process of being "built"! Having the website up and running will be an enormous benefit to the Association, RIRLA members and the general public. It will have many exciting features including: a "members only" member directory including species and breeds raised, up to date news and resources, as well as a searchable database for the general public to find member farms, just to name a few. The website should be up and running by the end of the year. If you have any suggestions of features you would like to see on the website please contact Jane Christopher at [vgeese@verizon.net](mailto:vgeese@verizon.net). Your input is greatly appreciated.

Some good news and some bad news

on the funding front. The good news is that the RI Rural Development Council has pledged and allocated funding from their appropriation from Senator Reed. This funding will help RIRLA maintain organizational stability through 2010 as it continues to fulfill its mission to support RI livestock farmers and make greater economic opportunities available to them. Many, many thanks to the RI Rural Development Council Board of Directors and to Gerry Bertrand for their continued support.

The bad news is that RIRLA did not receive funding for their grant request to the RI Foundation. Though this is unfortunate RIRLA is already in the process of writing a grant for a SARE Sustainable Community grant and will continue to seek funding from other grant sources. Your support of RIRLA through its 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Farm Supper was very important and greatly appreciated.

The Processing Scheduling Service is doing very well! Many appointments this fall have been filled to capacity and the Association has added extra dates to accommodate the volume of animals requested to be scheduled for processing. The Association is on track to double the total number of animals processed as well as double the total number of beef and hogs processed in 2008. This is great news for the Association, farmers, RI Beef & Veal, Westerly Packing, consumers and the general public. More business means more money added to Rhode Island's economy; more farms staying economically viable; more land in farms; strengthened local food infrastructure; more local, nutritious, sustainably produced meats available to consumers and preservation or rural history and culture. Not bad for an organization that started 4 years ago with 5 farmers!

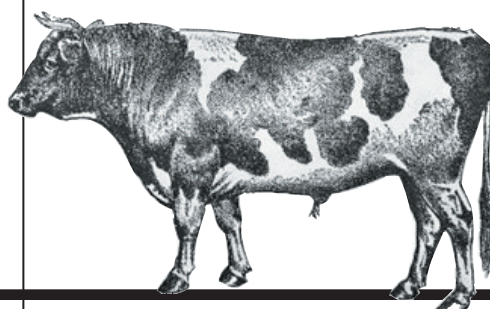
On a final note, Kimberly Sporkman of Kids First Farm to School lunch program was a guest at the October Board meeting. Kimberly's aim for this first meeting was simply to begin the conversation with farmers about the possibility of getting

locally raised meats into local school lunches. Kids First has had a lot of success with getting fruits and vegetables into schools. As a result of the meeting with Kimberly Cranston public schools decided purchased 40 pounds of RIRLA members' ground beef for a harvest festival celebration. It may be a small first step but at least we are moving in the right direction!

Well, that is about it for now. I would like to extend a huge thank you, once again, to all of the dedicated volunteers who make this the great organization that it is. Please don't hesitate to contact me at 401-575-3348 or [director-rirla@cox.net](mailto:director-rirla@cox.net) to schedule your animals, discuss an idea or voice any concerns you may have.



*RIRLA members partake of the locally-provided appetizers at the 1st Annual Farm Supper and Fundraiser.*





## Project Proposal:

## Improving Small Ruminant Parasite Control in New England

Submitted by Katherine Petersson, URI

A multi-state project proposal targeting parasite control in small ruminants was recently submitted to the Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program, a competitive grants program administered by the USDA. If accepted for funding the project would start next year and last a total of three years. The goal of this project is a reduction in anthelmintic use and improved parasite resistance in sheep and goats in the region. Small ruminant producers in Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Vermont will be the focus of the outreach component of this project. The educational approach taken in this project is comprised of surveys, workshops and on-site farm visits.

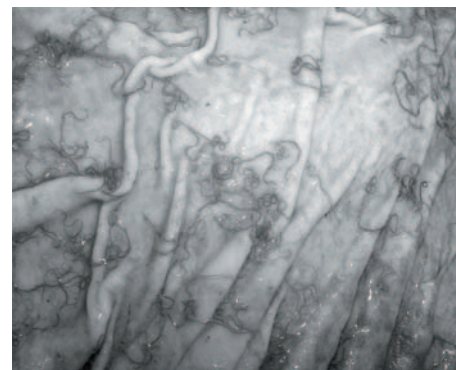
Before and after surveys will identify current parasite control practices and document any changes in control practices that occur over the project period. Two workshops per state per year will provide information on the latest research and hands-on training in the best management practices (BMP) for parasite control. Free on-site farm visits

will evaluate parasite prevalence and drug resistance and will provide post-workshop follow-up and BMP support. The onsite farm visits will also assist producers in the identification of both parasite resistant and susceptible animals within their flocks/herds through the use of the FAMACHA card system, fecal egg counts and body condition scoring. Information arising from this project will be disseminated through extension, agricultural reports and periodicals, extension newsletters, university websites, agricultural events and presentations.

In addition, research on the identification of potential natural de-wormers will be conducted at the University of Rhode Island in collaboration with Virginia Tech, Rutgers and the University of Wisconsin.

Extension and research faculty at seven universities are partners in this proposal: Dr. Katherine Petersson (Animal Scientist, Team Leader) and Kristen Castrataro (Extension Educator) from the University of Rhode Island, Joyce Meader (Extension Educator) from the University of Connecticut, Dr. Mark Huyler (Animal

Scientist) from the University of Massachusetts, Chet Parsons (Extension Educator) from the University of Vermont, Dr. Anne Zajac (Parasitologist) from Virginia Tech, Dr. Amy Howell (Biochemist) from Rutgers University and Dr. Jess Reed (Animal Scientist) from the University of Wisconsin. Proposal input is being solicited from producers around the region. Any producers who are interested in learning more about this project or would like to participate in this project should contact Katherine Petersson at the University of Rhode Island by e-mail [kpetersson@uri.edu](mailto:kpetersson@uri.edu) or by phone (401-874-2951).



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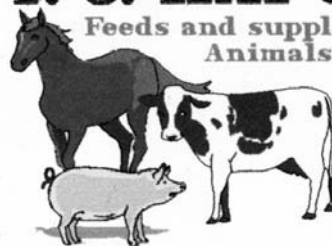


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# Greg Judy's High Density Grazing School Report

Submitted by Martha Neale

Martha and George Neale and Patrick McNiff recently attended Greg Judy's High Density Grazing School that featured Ian Mitchell-Innes as Holistic Management Trainer. The two components of the three day seminar were the emphasis on looking at your farming in a holistic way (particularly from a quality of life perspective) and the use of Holistic High Density Grazing. The first day was spent reviewing the economics of holistic grazing, the way our animals fit into the cycles of nature, the importance of ground litter in pastures and fencing. A pasture walk where the Judy herd was "rotated" to the next pasture helped demonstrate the benefits of grazing the grass taller and leaving more litter. The ratios of stocking rate to stocking density were continually being discussed. The use of free choice minerals was also explained. And the fact that you should bring the animals to the water and not the water to the animals was emphasized. Later that day a visit to a newly constructed local abattoir showed that even in Missouri there is the dilemma of having good local processing available.

The second day demonstrated animal performance practices. It is all about their intake of oxygen, hydrogen and protein which can be monitored by checking the pH of their urine, their mineral intake, and their health. Longer term observations include

looking at their coat, their conception rate, and the weaning percentage. The goal is to move the animals through the pastures in such a way that they can select the part(s) of a plant that they need to fulfill their nutritive and energy demands. This is where the stocking rate to stocking density is important. When an animal takes the higher vegetative part of a plant it is getting more hydrogen, when it takes the lower part of a plant it is getting more protein. The idea is that the animal will choose what it needs if given the selection. And the plants are taken care of by moving the animals through rapidly enough to leave enough trampled litter and with sufficient recovery time that the biodiversity of the pasture is encouraged.

Day three included an emphasis on implementing Holistic High Density Grazing on your farm. We should be looking to the future—even two generations from

now, and taking into account that the price of fossil fuel will continue to rise. It is the "cost" both financially and environmentally of fossil fuel-related activities that are stressing us at this point and it is only going to get worse. It should be about quality of life and what you would like to achieve. The use of Holistic High Density Grazing can eliminate the need for tractors, hay equipment, commercial fertilizers, and many other expensive inputs that are driving conventional farmers from the farm. It is about sustainability individually, financially and environmentally. Anyone that is feeling that there has to be a better way than the conventional practices taught in the last half century would benefit by taking a closer look at Holistic High Density Grazing.



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# Get Fresh. Buy Local.

The Rhode Island Division of Agriculture's collaborative *Get Fresh. Buy Local.* campaign successfully launched in May at RI Agriculture Day as a statewide effort to raise awareness of the availability, quality, and diversity of RI specialty crops (fruits, vegetables, nursery, floriculture, sod). The Campaign is funded by a USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant to DEM, which combined with additional USDA funding to the RI Rural Development Council, allows for expansion of the Campaign to other agricultural products such as milk, beef, and aquaculture at our state's farm stands and farmers markets.

Since the launch, there has been terrific feedback about campaign t-shirts, bumper stickers, reusable grocery bags and pins featuring the slogan: I GOT FRESH IN RHODE ISLAND. Farm stands, farmers' markets and other venues or organizations are now able to sell these items – and when featured at your farm/farmers markets alongside product stickers and signage – can help

significantly to generate attention and excitement for this important initiative. The Division of Agriculture will also distribute certain point-of-sale placards to farmers free of charge as in years past.

The Campaign's website – [getfreshbuylocal.org](http://getfreshbuylocal.org) – is an excellent resource for news, tips, and information, and offers details on how farmers and farmers market managers can get campaign materials directly through vendors.

Getfreshbuylocal.org features links to Facebook and Twitter, great resources for tips and up-to-date campaign information and events. For additional information, please contact Ken Ayars, RI Division of Agriculture chief, at [ken.ayars@dem.ri.gov](mailto:ken.ayars@dem.ri.gov) or Pete Susi, supervisor, Marketing Section, at [peter.susi@dem.ri.gov](mailto:peter.susi@dem.ri.gov).

## Members In Action



*Don & Heather Minto of Watson Farm were inducted into the RI Agricultural Hall of Fame at a ceremony at the State House in 2009. This well-deserved honor was in recognition of Don & Heather's work over the last 29 years at Watson Farm in Jamestown.*

*Jane Christopher received this year's Chairman's Award from the Northern RI Conservation District, for her conservation practices and restoration efforts at Holdsworth Farm in Foster, RI.*



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## Opportunities

### Farmer Testimony – Large Animal Veterinary Services

Scott Marshall of RI Division of Agriculture is requesting testimony from farmers regarding the difficulty of getting vet care for livestock animals. Testimony should include: how many animals you raise, how often you need a vet but can't get one out to the farm, what type of vet services you need, etc. The USDA is proposing to reimburse tuition for 40 veterinarians who will serve areas where there is a shortage of vets. Dr. Marshall will be writing the nomination for a large animal vet for RI. Your testimony will help him make the case. Contact Dr. Marshall 401-222-2781 ext. 4503 or [scott.marshall@dem.ri.gov](mailto:scott.marshall@dem.ri.gov) or send your comments to: Dr. Scott Marshall, RI Div. of Agriculture, 235 Promenade St., Providence, RI 02908-5767

### Whole Foods' Local Producer Loans

Loans range from \$1,000 to \$100,000 for growing your production, quantity or variety. [www.wholefoodsmarket.com/values/local-producer-details.php](http://www.wholefoodsmarket.com/values/local-producer-details.php)

*RIRLA wishes to thank our funders, the RI Foundation and the USDA for their support.*



## Educational Resources

### Online Courses

Cornell Cooperative Extension and the NY Beginning Farmer Project have created two basic online courses to help you think through the major factors related to farm start-up. A dynamic learning experience that incorporates both self-paced readings and real-time virtual meetings with discussion forums, presentations by successful farmers, homework activities, and developing a customized plan for your next steps in farming. For more information, see: <http://www.nybeginningfarmers.org/index.php?paeg=onlinecourse>.

#### **Markets and Profits: Make Money Selling What you Grow.**

##### **Course Duration:**

6 weeks beginning Jan. 8, 2010. Cost: \$100. For more information about a variety of small farm topics, visit: [www.smallfarms.cornell.edu](http://www.smallfarms.cornell.edu).

### URI Course

#### **Exploring the Small Farm Dream: Is Starting an Agricultural Business Right for You?**

##### **Course Description:**

In this four-session course, you will set personal and farming goals, assess available resources, determine if farming as a business is right for you, and develop an action plan to guide next steps. Along the way you will take a close look at the realities of working for yourself, in particular what it will take to own and manage a successful agricultural venture.

##### **Who Should Attend?**

If you are thinking about starting an agricultural business, this course is designed for you. This includes people thinking about full-time farming, farming part-time while continuing other employment, changing careers

to start a farm, taking over an existing family farm business, and/or developing an existing but informal agricultural pastime into a more serious business activity. Established farmers who are re-strategizing their businesses have also benefited from the course.

##### **Dates:**

The class will meet 6-9pm on:  
February 23, 2010  
March 2, 2010  
March 16, 2010  
March 23, 2010

##### **Location:**

Building #75, East Farm  
University of Rhode Island  
Route 108, Kingston, RI 02881

##### **Class Size:**

Limited to 20 individuals. (2 partners per potential business may register.)

##### **Cost:**

\$275 per potential farm business (maximum of two participants per business). Fee includes one workbook, additional handout materials, and light snack. Participants may bring bag dinner if needed.

To Apply by February 5, 2010:  
Contact Kristen Castrataro at:  
401-874-2967 or [kcas@uri.edu](mailto:kcas@uri.edu).

##### **Course Sponsors:**

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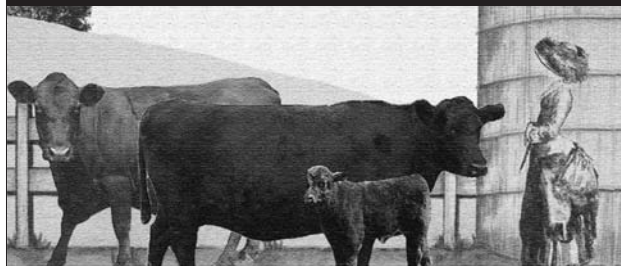


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the from the USDA seal



## Member Profile

## John T. Howard Agency

John Howard, owner of the John T. Howard Agency representing Farm Family Insurance Company has been a supporter of Rhode Island Agriculture for many years. Before joining Farm Family Insurance, he worked with Rhode Island farmers consulting on farm business management through Cooperative Extension for several years. He served on the Exeter Town Council and then on the Zoning Board of Review. John was a member of the Ag Land Preservation Commission. He was also a member of the First Pioneer Farm Credit Customer Council.

While raising their family, John and his wife, Holly ran Our Kids Farm in Exeter. They grew sweet corn, pumpkins and vegetables and also ran a farm stand and a greenhouse operation. Raising turkeys, laying hens, a small herd of black sheep, milking a few goats as well as a cow and raising veal calves and hogs was part of various 4-H and FFA projects and

provided food for their own family. They were also founding members of the South Kingstown Farmer's Market.

As an insurance professional representing Farm Family Insurance Company, John has been servicing the insurance and financial service needs of Rhode Island farmers for the last 23 years. Farm Family Insurance offers products especially designed for farmers such as the Special Farm Package. His office can also meet your needs to protect your farm, vehicles, and machinery. Farm Family also offers life and disability insurance as well as retirement plans including annuities and other investments.

As an agribusiness person in Rhode Island, it is important to protect the assets and exposures that you have worked so hard to build. John provides the agricultural background and insurance knowledge that will help you fully protect your farm business. As your

farm business grows and evolves it is important to have an insurance review as changes in your business can affect your coverages. For instance sending trucks on the road, adding a farm stand, allowing people onto your property, selling food for consumption all open the door for potential liability exposure. Adding new equipment or making improvements to the farm would also change your insurance needs. John suggests a yearly insurance review to up-date coverages and to be sure that your hard work is protected.

John T. Howard Agency is conveniently located right off interstate route 95 at 780 Victory Highway (route 102) in West Greenwich. The phone number is 401-397-1050 or he can be reached at [john\\_howard@farmfamily.com](mailto:john_howard@farmfamily.com). His office staff will be glad to make an appointment for an insurance review and answer any questions you may have.



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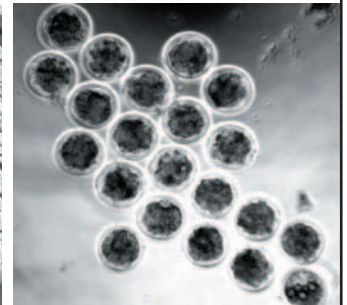




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# The Family Farm Preservation and Conservation Estate Tax Act

Estate tax laws are under review in Congress ahead of the scheduled expiration of current estate tax provisions in 2010. One such piece of legislation is H.R. 3524, the Family Farm Preservation and Conservation Estate Tax Act, sponsored by Representative Mike Thompson (D-CA). NACD supports estate tax reform that exempts qualified family farms and ranches from estate and death taxes. NACD has endorsed this legislation and we urge you to contact your Members of Congress in support of estate tax reform.

H.R. 3524 would amend the Internal Revenue Code to exclude from the gross estate the value of property used by a descendant and the descendant's family as a farm for farming purposes, including working woodlands, and certain qualified conservation easements. The bill would

also impose a recapture tax if such farmland is sold outside the decedent's family or is no longer used for farming purposes or if a qualified conservation easement is likewise sold or used in violation of the terms of such easement.

Congress is considering tax issues and we need to make sure estate tax issues, like those addressed in H.R. 3524 are included in their discussions. Broad support for H.R. 3524 is needed to continue discussions on Capitol Hill.

Ways to contact your representative. U.S. Capitol switchboard at 202-224-3121.

Representative Patrick Kennedy's contact info at the Washington, D.C. office: 407 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515, (202) 225-4911, Fax: (202) 225-3290.

Representative Kennedy's district office: 249 Roosevelt Avenue Suite 200, Pawtucket, R.I. 02860, (401) 729-5600, (800) 392-5772, Fax: (401) 729-5608.

Or go to <https://forms.house.gov/formpatrickkennedy/IMA/contact.htm> to email him.

Representative James Langevin's contact info at his Washington, D.C. office: 109 Cannon House Office Building, Washington D.C. 20515, (202) 225-2735, fax: (202) 225-5976. Representative Langevin's district office: 300 Centerville Rd., Suite 200 South Warwick, RI 02886, (401) 732-9400, fax: (401) 737-2982. Or go to <http://langevin.house.gov/contact.shtml> and click on "email your comments."

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# Large Animal Veterinary Meeting

**D**r. Scott Marshall, state veterinarian at the RI Division of Agriculture, in partnership with the RI Raised Livestock Association, organized a meeting between livestock farmers and members of the RI Veterinary Medical Association (RIVMA). The purpose of the meeting, which took place on Wednesday, November 18 at the USDA Service center in Warwick, was to discuss the lack of large animal veterinarians, issues of access to vets, cost of care, can farmers do more themselves, what else can RIVMA and others do to help with animal care to promote the family/commercial farm..

About 30 people were present at the meeting, including farmers and a number of small animal vets who came to learn how they might be able to assist. It quickly became apparent that there are multiple issues at multiple levels that play into the problem. Besides the unfortunate fact (at least for now) that there are just not enough large animals in the state to support a large animal practice there are also concerns with: a general lack of agricultural infrastructure in the state; cross-state regulations and licensing costs for veterinarians; a lack of new veterinarians that want to go into large animal practice; small animal vets that may not have the training or experience to treat large animals; and even the overall profitability of livestock farms in the area.

Some proposals that resulted from the productive discussion included: using RIRLA as a means to group and schedule farms (by area) for herd health visits; supporting URI's effort to establish a veterinarian technician program; workshops for farmers - given by veterinarians - on parasites, vaccination, nutrition, reproduction and other common health issues; continuing education and training on large animals for small animals vets; addressing various New England state regulations licensing issues; and forming a working group to continue the discussion and work toward solutions.

Along these same lines, Dr. Marshall is requesting testimony from livestock farmers regarding the difficulty of getting veterinarian care for livestock animals. The USDA is proposing to reimburse tuition for 40 veterinarians who will serve areas where there is a shortage of vets. Dr. Marshall will be writing the nomination for a large animal vet for RI. Your testimony will help him make the case.

Testimony should include: how many animals you raise, how often you need a vet but can't get one out to the farm, what type of vet services you need, etc. Contact Dr. Marshall 401-222-2781 ext. 4503 or [scott.marshall@dem.ri.gov](mailto:scott.marshall@dem.ri.gov) or send your comments to: Dr. Scott Marshall, RI Div. of Agriculture, 235 Promenade St., Providence, RI 02908-5767.



## Rhode Island Raised Livestock Association

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RIRLA News is published quarterly by the Rhode Island Raised Livestock Association. RIRLA's mission is "to promote the preservation of our agricultural lands, our rural economy, and our agrarian way of life by creating an organization that will secure a viable infrastructure and provide for the efficient and sustainable production, processing, and marketing of quality, value added, locally produced meats in the state of Rhode Island".

Annual membership is \$30 per RI farm, \$100 per out-of-state farm and includes the newsletter. We also accept unsolicited donations. RIRLA News welcomes articles, photographs, letters and classified advertising for possible publication. Publication of articles or advertisements is not necessarily an endorsement by RIRLA. Articles from this newsletter may not be reprinted without permission. ©RIRLA 2009

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