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NEWS

Winter 2011

Volume 4 Issue 4

RIRLA Donates Meats to Providence Rescue Mission

In case you were not at the September 26 meeting, we discussed donating the meat from the September 9th Beef Cutting Workshop. It did not bring much money at all at the Annual Fundraiser Silent Auction last year, and since it was not a RI Raised animal, we felt donation was ideal. Additionally, for this animal, a grant paid for the carcasses, the fees paid for the cutting. There was also enough grant money to pay for the carcasses AND the cutting for the hog/lamb workshop held on October 14th.

Member Pete Whitman's family

volunteers at The Providence Rescue Mission as well as donating a portion of their proceeds there. Pete mentioned the number of people the Rescue Mission feeds weekly just as information and the motion was immediately made and seconded to donate the entire 231# side there. Pete let me know the following:

The cook from the Rescue Mission picked up the meat on Wednesday, October 5th. (he is from Westerly and knew Westerly Packing). Needless to say they were absolutely thrilled with the donation!! He wanted me to pass along their thanks to the Association. Mark (the cook) told me

that it was all that the Executive Director, Sean Carew, was talking about for days. Mark called me as soon as he had left Westerly Packing and said the donation was "absolutely awesome". I didn't want to be presumptuous and mention the pork or lamb (I am really looking forward to those cut workshops).

Could you please let the rest of the board know that the RIRLA donation was VERY much appreciated.

It looks like this was a good choice and very appreciated. We decided at the meeting that the hog/lamb would also go to The Rescue Mission. As President Will Wright said, "It's good karma".

Save These Event Dates!

View "American Meat" Saturday, January 21, 2012

Screening of the documentary "American Meat", Louttit Library, 274 Victory Highway, West Greenwich, RI. Come watch a unique documentary about the U.S. meat industry. The Association was able to rent a copy of this for a one-time showing, and we are asking for a donation of \$5 per person. Doors open at 5:00 pm. Please RSVP to Heidi at riraised@gmail.com.

This is a description of the film from their website, www.americanmeatfilm.com: "American Meat" is a solutions-oriented macroscopic documentary surveying the current state of the U.S. meat industry. Featuring Joel Salatin, Chuck Wirtz, Fred Kirschenmann, Steve Ells, Paul Willis, and tens of farmers across America, we take an even-handed

look at animal husbandry.

We explain how America arrived at our current industrial system, and show you the feedlots and confinement houses, not through hidden cameras but through the eyes of the farmers who live and work there. From there, we introduce the current revolution developing in animal husbandry, led by the charismatic and passionate Joel Salatin. We meet tens of farmers across the country who have changed their life to start grass-based farms, and we highlight everyday tangible solutions that people can take to change agriculture in America."

Watch the trailer on youtube:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=knNLZvphhfs>

RIRLA Annual Meeting Monday, March 19, 2012

RIRLA will hold its Annual Meeting at the Coventry-West Greenwich Elks hall. We encourage every member to attend. Vendors are being invited to set up tables and be available to our members before the meeting. A light supper will be provided. More details will follow as we get closer.

RIRLA Annual Farm Supper Saturday, May 12, 2012

The RIRLA Annual Farm Supper Fundraiser will be held this year at Addieville East Farm in Mapleville, RI. www.addieville.com

The Board chose to wait until Spring to hold this event, to take advantage of the warmer weather. Preparations are under way to make it a huge success. Mark the date, and invite your friends!

RIRLA Update

Submitted by Heidi Quinn, Association Coordinator



The sun is shining as brightly as it was the last time I sat to write for the newsletter, but this time it is a full 50 degrees colder than that mid-July day.

We've been through many weather changes since then with Hurricane (or almost) Irene, early snow in October and heavy rains that flooded low lying areas yet again. While weather extremes affect almost everyone, they certainly affect farmers more than the average person. Livestock, hay and corn fields, grazing, vegetable crops and orchards all see varying effects from unexpected changes in the weather, and this year was no exception. No amount of planning can protect a 20 acre field from the effects of the salt spray coming inland, and it's only one of the risks that farming entails. We are a livestock association, but our own members are a diverse group. Some focus on a single species of livestock, but most raise multiple species or supplement their livestock with poultry or produce. Farming isn't just a job, it's a lifestyle. It is rare to find a farm today that can rely solely on its income for the family, and most farm families have at least one person working off-farm for additional income or health insurance. There are no turn-key vacations where you simply make sure the coffee pot is unplugged and lock the doors to head off. It's a commitment 365 days a year if animals are involved. Hopefully all of you made it through the storms with little damage and are recovering from any losses. Starting this month, URI begins a three-year USDA/

Northeast SARE Grant : Taking in the Whole Picture: Incorporating Holistic Management on RI's Farms. This grant is intended to help farmers run their farms and allow them to be at their best through good financial management, good health and combining down-time with their work. Upcoming workshops are listed on the RIRLA website as well as later in this newsletter.

On December 9, Jane Christopher and I drove to Concord, NH, for the 2nd Annual Meeting of the New England Farmers Union. It was inspiring to hear stories of other farmers, most of them farming on the same scale as our members. One of the speakers at the NEFU conference was a beginning farmer from all places, Providence, RI. Tess and her sisters created Sidewalk Ends Farm with a close friend, digging lead contaminated soil out of an empty lot in south Providence and replacing it with clean soil and compost. In conjunction with another city farm, they run a CSA utilizing the abundant produce they raise in this extremely urban setting. Her speech was inspiring to the point of tears for many in the audience. This young lady IS a farmer. She digs in the earth and produces food for her family, friends and neighbors. Her desire to express, in her words, her patriotism through gardening and helping to maintain this connection to the Earth is amazing. The fact that she does this in a seemingly impossible setting is shocking to me, having grown up on a farm with land and clean soil plentiful. I cannot imagine taking on what Tess and so many others in the city, many through Southside Community Land Trust's City Farm, have done. The NEFU meeting reminded us of the diversity in our farms, but the connection

that we all have in feeding ourselves and others. It was well worth the drive.

An update on how RIRLA continues to grow in regards to processing numbers. Here is a brief comparison of the first 3 quarters of 2010 vs 2011.

Overall there is an increase of over 20% in the total numbers of animals processed. All species but lamb show an increase in this time frame, and lamb picked up sharply in Nov. and Dec. although that is not reflected here. Through September, we have been open to processing 10 weeks more in 2011 than the same time period in 2010. Only one of these weeks operated at a loss (less income was generated than the flat weekly transportation fee) but that week had a last minute cancellation. In short, operating more weeks has been helpful and has not cost the Association, rather the animals have been well distributed among the weeks with expected seasonal increases. In preparation for 2012, please remember to book your animals as soon as you have processing plans in mind. In addition to processing numbers increasing, each month is bringing us new members. Planning ahead is the best way to ensure a date that fits into your marketing plans.

As the cold weather settles in around us, may your home be warm, your family and your animals healthy and your friends many. Have a wonderful holiday season, whatever you celebrate.

Happy New Year!

Heidi Quinn

	Total Weeks of Processing Jan.-Sept.	Beef Jan.-Sept	Hog Jan.-Sept	Veal Jan.-Sept	Lamb Jan.-Sept	Total Number Animals Processed Jan.-Sept
2010	27	132	144	21	153	450
2011	37	174	213	24	134	545

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Updates from RI Division of Agriculture

by Scott Marshall, DVM

I would like to take this opportunity to give you all an update on one issue that we have been working on together, and to ask for your assistance on another issue that will have an impact on animal agriculture in the country.

First off I am very happy to announce that the USDA has once again identified RI as a shortage area for veterinary services. This classification paves the way for a veterinarian to come to RI for the purpose of meeting the needs of RI livestock farmers, and in so doing, the USDA will repay a very significant portion of that veterinarians student loans under the Veterinary Medical Loan Repayment Program, the VMLRP.

RI received this designation last year too, but unfortunately we were not "matched" with a veterinarian. We fared much better this year! This year we were matched with a veterinarian, Dr Dina Scotto. Dr Scotto was raised in RI but is currently living out of state. She is now in the process of gathering all of the equipment and supplies that she will need in order to serve RI livestock

producers and will be eventually moving "home." She will need to spend a minimum of thirty percent of her time working to meet RI's declared shortage needs. RIRLA leadership and members were instrumental in identifying RI as a shortage area and assisting in the delivery of veterinary services to their members, through this effort and through the listing of large animal veterinarians in the monthly newsletter. Thank you for your role in this accomplishment.

The other issue that I would like to discuss is that I am requesting animal industry volunteers to help me form and to participate on an Animal Disease Traceability advisory panel. As you may be aware, the USDA has abandoned its ill-fated program known as the National Animal Identification System, or NAIS. They abandoned NAIS in large part due to pushback from animal agriculture, primarily small livestock producers like you.

All state animal health officials recognize and support a system of rapidly tracing diseased animals so that

proper disease containment can occur and the state and nation's livestock can be kept safe. However, how this is best accomplished needs to be determined by each individual state rather than a one size fits all federal program. Therefore, the USDA has taken the position of letting each state develop their own traceability program, but each program has to meet reasonable performance standards that will be written in federal regulation. All state animal health officials have agreed to this in concept, however the federal regulations have yet to be developed. I therefore ask that livestock producers remain engaged in the development of the state's program by ensuring that RIRLA is represented on the Animal Disease Traceability advisory panel (once that panel is officially formed) and that they continue to monitor the USDA's Animal Disease Traceability rulemaking process.

I would also, and most importantly, like to take this opportunity to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a safe and joyous Holiday Season.

Herdwick Sheep

Submitted by Jane Christopher

Chris and I had an opportunity to go to the UK in September to watch the World Sheepdog Trials in England, visit some friends, and take in the sights of Northern England, the Midlands and Edinburgh.

We fell in love with the scenery and hill farms of the Lake District, an area of mountains and valleys, 17th century farms, stone walls climbing straight up the steep hills, and filled with sheep and cattle everywhere you turn. Narrow roads with no shoulders and speedy local drivers made it difficult to pull over to get a good look at some of the livestock we passed, but we saw groups of Angus, what appeared to be Charolais, some Hereford and Belted Galloways, and the occasional dairy herd of Holsteins. And sheep! Sheep everywhere.

The primary purebred sheep in this area are Fell sheep, Herdwick, and Swaledale. The Herdwick and Fell sheep in this area aren't to be found elsewhere in the country. Most of the commercial sheep used in this area are crosses, bred for a combination of motherability and the vigor required to withstand difficult winters and a shortage of forage. Usually, the Fell sheep, thought to have been brought over and domesticated by Vikings, is crossed with the Blue Faced Border Leicester. The resulting combination is called a "mule".

As a bit of history, the Herdwick sheep were a particular favorite of Beatrix Potter, the author and illustrator (Peter Rabbit), who also lived in the Lake

District and bought up many Hill Farms in danger of being sold for development. She left them to the National Trust upon her death, with the stipulation that the farms be let at a reasonable rent, and that the landlord's flocks of sheep on the fell farms should be pure Herdwick in breed. Lake District farms tend to have a small amount of privately owned or managed 'in-bye'

land or pasture in the valley bottoms, divided by dry-stone walls, and large areas of commonly grazed fell land. Each Lake District Herdwick farm is granted commoner grazing rights for a set number of sheep on any given common, that are set by custom to reflect the grazing capacity of the fell. Each farm has ways of identifying its sheep, so should any stray, or be mistakenly

gathered to a neighboring farmstead they can be identified and returned to the rightful owner. There are two traditional kinds of identification: 'lug marks' are small notches in the sheep's ear in a set pattern that identifies the sheep's owner; 'smit marks' are colored marks on the sheep's fleece.

Herdwick sheep flocks were historically managed in such a way that the sheep

know which bit of the fell they are supposed to graze, and unlike most other sheep breeds they keep to this 'heaf'. We heard this referred to as "heafing", sometimes pronounced "hefting". Each generation of sheep pass this knowledge of belonging on to their offspring. Herdwicks are brought down from the Fells for lambing in April/May. The lambs

are weaned at 6 months, and the adult

ewes are turned back on to the Fells. The lambs stay in the valley until the next spring, and when they are turned on to the Fells themselves, they return to where they were born. Each mother and her new lamb(s) accept last year's lamb back to their section of the heaf. Adult ewes are usually culled in their third year, preventing overpopulation of their



Herdwicks at Millbeck Farm.

area. Because these unique sheep have this in-built homing instinct it would be disastrous if the flock were sold when a farmer retired. So Lake District farms are bought or rented with the existing flocks of sheep in place ('landlord flocks'). Incoming farmers inherit the flocks that belong to the land, and which have been in place for centuries. Excess sheep can be sold, with respected peers' setting the price of purchase and judging the condition of the stock. Herdwick sheep are, literally, the living culture of the farming people of the Lake District.

Herdwick breed characteristics are a broad, long body with a muscular shape and strong boned legs, and a heavy, dense coat of wool with an insulating undercoat of fine wool, perfect for surviving Lake District winters. The wool is suited mainly for carpets, suiting and blankets. All lambs are born black, and go through a process called "peeling" their first year; their faces will start to turn grey/white, and gradually their body fleece turns a brownish color, leav-



Herdwick lamb beginning to "peel".

ing a grey fleece after their first shearing. Tail docking is not allowed, and castrating is very selective.

I can't say that Herdwicks are the most beautiful of sheep, but they do have an endearing quality to their look. We stayed one night at a B&B at Millbeck Farm run by Eric and Sue Taylforth in the Great Langdale valley near Ambleside, a 1620 farmhouse running 3,000 Herdwick sheep and 350 Aberdeen Angus on their 2,000 acres of land to which they have grazing rights. www.millbeckfarm.co.uk To a visitor's eye, initially the farm looked an idyllic spot - a beautiful, lush valley with a lovely narrow river, beautiful hills all around. But a heavy rain two nights before our arrival had caused so much runoff of water from the hills that the river rose, and at 3 a.m. farmer Taylforth was out on his 4 wheeler, sack of grain behind, luring the cattle and sheep to higher ground before they were washed away, apparently an occurrence that's happened often enough that rainfall is watched carefully and is a

cause for concern!

There was a handsome Angus cow and bottle fed calf in the barnyard paddock - the cow had given birth on the steep hillside, the calf rolled down the hill, and by the time the Eric and Sue reunited the spooked mother and calf a few hours later, the cow refused to nurse her calf - though she would tolerate and play with it.

We heard a few very distressing tales about the experiences with the foot and mouth breakout in 2001, and a couple of nauseating reports of how a few farmers, eager for the government payout to compensate for their loss of livestock, intentionally infected their own flocks in order to collect.

Farmer Eric Taylforth of Millbeck also told us about how local Herdwick farmers were invited to participate in a voluntary program of testing their Tups (rams) for genome type, in an effort to eliminate those carrying what was considered a weak gene that would be susceptible to F&M, but Mr. Taylforth

refused, believing that they were destroying the stronger sheep. He feels time has proven him to be correct, as his flock has thrived, and those who participated in the government program are now seeing poorer quality offspring.

We did see evidence at butcher shops and on restaurant menus that local meat is being promoted, much in the same way it is here. The Taylforths sell their meat from the farm only, and get a better price by doing it that way. They have established a good clientele and have a good product. Because the grazing conditions of the region are sparse, and the sheep grow slowly, Herdwicks aren't sent to market until they are two years old, and as they state on their website, the sheep are "ready when they're ready".

The trip was great - it was tough to come home. We'd love to return and rent one of the two cottages the Taylforths have available on their farm for a week, and learn more about farming in that region.

For years Lake District farmers have received subsidies for raising animals. Common Agricultural Policy and production based headage payments had a significant impact on livestock enterprises in the Lake District, with most farmers significantly increasing numbers kept to capitalise on subsidy income. Between 1987 and 1999 sheep numbers increased markedly, and there was a 21% reduction in the number of hill farms which kept cattle as well as sheep. Foot and Mouth Disease in 2001 and the replacement of headage subsidies with area based payments through the Single Payment Scheme (SPS) has seen more recent reduction in both sheep and cattle numbers. Farmers have a tough time making ends meet, and many are getting out. And as a result very few young people want to get into farming, a

lament we heard from a few older farmers. 159 active Herdwick sheep farmers in



Millbeck Farm barnyard.

Cumbria manage the majority of the Lake District upland landscape, including the fells and valleys and represent agricultural roots dating back 5,000 years. Subsidies have, in recent years, represented up to 40% of a farm's income, and were made in recognition of the difficult regional farm conditions and the role the farms play in maintaining the landscape and rural communities of the hills. The decrease in subsidies, as well as the Dept. for Environmental Food and Rural Affairs call for reducing hill farm livestock numbers in order to change the region's biodiversity, make sustainable farming almost impos-

sible. Farmers have to diversify, embracing tourism and off-farm income to simply keep their farms and doing what they love best. Although some might see destocking and its impact on sheep farming a "necessary casualty" in the evolution of balancing farming and biodiversity, many are voicing concerns over an overzealous effort to change the balance.

Nominated as a Unesco World Heritage Site, listing the living tradition of sheep farming based on the Herdwick and other local breeds and the associated cultural heritage of this tradition, the proposal accompanying the nomination cites: "There is concern that combined with a decline in the numbers of people living and working on the land, inadequate structure to allow communal management of key elements such as walls, hedges, water courses and grazed common fells, social and economic systems that support them are weakening."

The nominators also point to a lack of foresight as the global food demand will rise by 40% by 2020, and England should be looking at sustainable intensification of their agricultural products.

Portions extracted from 2009 Briefing Paper, Lake District National Park.



"Mules"

A Summer For Testing

Wet weather, parasites, and nutritional management

Submitted by Don Hopkins, Hopkins Southdowns, Scituate, RI

For those of us who care for small ruminants this very wet summer has brought forth some challenging management tasks. Here at Hopkins Southdowns we have had a real battle with internal parasites, more types and kinds than anyone could hope for.

No one enjoys overmedicating their animals, but without intervention and medication, parasites can, at their worst, cause an animal to grow poorly and slowly waste away. Unfortunately, the wet weather patterns we have experienced the last couple of years have resulted in an overload of parasites in our fields. Lambs are more susceptible to parasites than adult sheep and need to be monitored carefully. Once our lambs are weaned we keep them in lots with access to the barn.

What occurred this year is that we would treat the lambs for parasites and due to wet conditions, 5-6 weeks later they would be loaded again, and this especially occurred with coccidia. We also had a vast assortment of stomach worms including Trichostrongyles,

Haemonchus and Nematodirus.

The best course of action we found to keep our lambs as clean as possible and growing well was doing regular fecal samples, which are cost effective and affordable to do. This is where I strongly recommend a good relationship with your vet. I use Brooklyn/Canterbury vet clinic with great success. I gather up fecal samples and drop them off and within a few hours we receive a call with results and a recommendation of treatment at a very affordable cost. The best results were found when we wormed the lambs and followed up with a second treatment two weeks later. We then left the lambs where they were for 2-3 days to flush out, and at that point they were moved to a clean lot which hopefully was not contaminated. I would suggest retesting 4-6 weeks later. To sum up, I cannot stress enough the importance of getting a good test done, and having a good working relationship with the vet of your choice.

To further determine that we are meeting the proper intake requirements

of our lambs and adult sheep, another test that we use on regular basis is a forage test on the hay we feed. A core sample of the hay is taken and sent off to have its protein content analyzed. Whether you are a grass fed operation or use a combination of roughage and concentrate this is a valuable tool. There are several ways to get this done, one of which is through your feed dealer. We use Central Conn. Coop - they will help you take the sample and provide the proper shipping container and paperwork. Our testing is done at Dairy One Forage Testing Laboratory in Ithaca, NY. At a time of record high feed costs this test helps to make good feeding decisions to maximize production without using excess feed. Almost all good feed companies have either access to or on staff a feed nutritionist that can help you make good feeding decisions to keep costs in check.

See www.foragetesting.org for details on forage testing

1: Coccidia: A single-cell protazoa which has a single host. All ruminants can be challenged by coccidia but the strains of coccidia vary according to host species. Infection begins with the ingestion of environmentally resistant oocysts that have been passed through fecal matter under suitable environmental conditions. The shed oocyst must have moisture to undergo cellular division and become sporulated. They become dormant when it is dry or frozen. Once the sporulated oocyst settles in the host intestinal tissue it multiplies, destroys host cells, and sheds in the manure. Coccidia can live in adult animals, but the young (under 2 yrs) are most vulnerable. Symptoms of coccidiosis include anorexia (poor appetite), abdominal pain, unthriftiness, diarrhea which can be bloody, and straining to defecate.

Severe and even fatal coccidiosis can occur during the early asexual stages of infection before oocysts have had time to develop, therefore a negative fecal test can

be misleading.

2: Trichostrongyles, Haemonchus, and Nematodirus are all varieties of Nematodes. Trichostrongyles cause severe damage to the intestines of grazing ruminants especially in late summer, early fall. Larval and adult stages burrow into and attach to the gut lining where they utilize feed consumed by the host. They cause widespread destruction and flattening of the infected portion of the gut. Heavy infestations can cause acute diarrhea/unthriftiness/stunted growth in young animals.

Haemonchus settles in the abomasum and causes extreme hemorrhagic anemia. Mucous membranes appear pale and can cause edema of the lower jaw, rapid deep respiration, and increased heart rate. In early acute stages sudden death may occur even in animals in adequate body condition. When chronic, emaciation occurs.

Nematodirus causes acute diarrhea, inappetence, lethargy, and death, especially in the spring and fall. Adults are carriers but largely resistant to health complications.

Affected lambs/kids/ crias/calves lose weight and face serious dehydration. The ova shed through manure can survive winter freezes then thaw and hatch in warmer weather.

3. All ruminants and swine are susceptible to both nematodes and coccidia. Deer can also spread meningeal worm to small ruminants. Other parasites of concern to ruminants include tapeworms and lungworms.

4. Most oocysts and ova require moisture for cell division/maturation. This is why parasites are of less concern during hot/dry summers and cold winters with a sustained freeze.

5. As far as specific treatments are concerned, with overuse of certain products, parasites have built up resistance and thus compromised the efficacy of some chemicals. Check with your vet to determine the best product to use for your specific problem.

Parasite information provided by BCLAC.

Livestock Grazing and Good Forestry Practices

by Marc Tremblay, Forester

There have been recent increases in agricultural activities in Rhode Island, as evidenced by Division of Agriculture statistics on new farms being established and the increased marketing activities by organizations like the RI Raised Livestock Association (RIRLA) and Rhody Wool. Pasturage for this resurgence in livestock has been reclaiming the old farm fields and woodland areas that were once cleared or browsed by farm animals. The days of open range may be gone, but we've seen a number of examples of woodlots

shrubs such as Japanese barberry and Multi-flora rose; and soil compaction that can affect water quality as well as tree survival.

In the literature on Silvo-pasture from the USDA's National Agroforestry Center, a couple of points stand out:

1. "This practice is increasingly being applied to pine stands, such as loblolly pine/bahia-grass or ponderosa pine/native grass. To date, there has been little research to justify grazing within hardwood stands, with a notable

more experienced animals.

Tree pattern is an important factor for silvo-pasture success. Trees can be evenly distributed over the area to optimize growing space and light for both trees and forage. Alternatively, grouping trees into rows or clusters concentrates their shade and root effects while providing open spaces for pasture production. Trees are typically pruned to increase light penetration and develop high-quality sawlogs. Silvo-pastures of varying ages can be merged and managed on a landscape basis.

Grazing can control grass competition for moisture, nutrients, and sunlight, thereby enhancing tree growth. Well managed grazing provides economical control of weeds and brush without herbicides, maintains fire breaks, and reduces habitat for gnawing rodents. Fertilizer applied for forage is also used by trees. In addition, livestock manure recycles nutrients to trees and forage.

Livestock grazing should be intensively managed. A successful silvo-pasture requires understanding forage growth characteristics and managing the timing and duration of grazing to avoid browsing of young tree seedlings. Similar approaches can minimize damage by trampling or rubbing. Improper management of silvo-pastures can reduce desirable woody and herbaceous plants by over-grazing and soil compaction. Thus, proper management is the key to success.

Available management tools include:

- tree harvesting, thinning, or pruning;
- fertilization to improve both forage and tree production;
- planting legumes for nitrogen fixation and forage production;
- multi-pasture, rotational grazing;
- rotational burning;
- supplemental feeding;
- developing water sources (e.g., stock tanks, windmills, photovoltaic pumps, hydraulic rams, ridge reservoirs, etc.);
- locating salt/mineral licks, and walkways to encourage uniform livestock distribution; and
- fencing (e.g., standard or electric),



Lou Vinagro has successfully used cows and pigs to control undergrowth. Limiting livestock exposure prevents damage to the trees.

being opened up to grazing livestock.

This article will look at a couple of examples of agro-forestry practices and specifically the applicability of silvo-pasture use in the predominately hardwood stands we have here in RI. What are the impacts on our woodlands? Are there situations where livestock grazing can be managed to minimize those impacts?

Browsing impacts include direct damages to trees from rubbing; selective removal of understory vegetation, which can lead to establishment of invasive

exception being the successful grazing of pecan orchard/fescue grass systems. (excerpted from the "National Association of RC&D Councils (NARC&DC) Report: RC&D Survey of Agroforestry Practices, 2000);

2. Livestock are more likely to impact hardwood trees than conifers. In general, browsing animals such as sheep, goats, or deer are more likely to eat trees; whereas, large grazing animals such as cattle or elk or more likely to step on young trees. Younger livestock are more prone to damage trees than are older,

tubing, plastic mesh, repellents, and seasonal livestock exclusion to reduce damage to young seedlings.

(Excerpted from Agroforestry Notes, AF-8, 1997)

According to Chris Modisette, State Forester of the RI NRCS office, *"We are looking at Silvo-pasture but having a hard time getting our hands around research on its appropriateness in hardwood stands. It might be harder to assess when we are looking at swine versus grazing animals. The concern would be that we would be creating a resource concern where there currently is none."*

During the past six-eight months, an effort has been underway to develop a USDA Agroforestry Strategic Framework to help guide the direction of agroforestry within USDA.



Forest undergrowth at Lou Vinagro's Foster farm before livestock exposure.

Could a shared equipment bank help Rhode Island farmers?

Farm equipment is expensive to buy, costly to maintain, and new technology can be difficult to keep up with...

The RI Association of Conservation Districts is beginning a study on the feasibility of equipment sharing in Rhode Island.

We need your input!

Keep an eye out for a survey in your inbox in the next month, and let us know if you are interested in learning more about the project!

Contact Becca Buckler at (401) 934-0842

Becca.RIACD@gmail.com

Funded by a USDA NIFA Beginning Farmer Development Grant *Tools of the Trade: Meeting the Needs of Today's New Peri-Urban Farmers in RI and Southern New England*, and by the RI Agricultural Partnership through a van Buren Charitable Foundation Grant.

RIRLA Educational Programs Wrap-up

Submitted by Heidi Quinn

Beef and Hog/Lamb Cut Workshops

The two cutting workshops this fall at Westerly Packing were a great experience. Fifteen members attended the Beef Workshop where meat cutters Cody and Javier cut down a 231 lb. side of beef from the cooler hook, showing us step by step, all the way to packing some with the Cryovac machine. Participants were taken on a tour of WP to see all the changes that are being made to streamline the process of taking the animal from the loading dock to the freezer.

On October 14, seventeen members attended a Lamb and Hog Workshop at Westerly Packing. Cody showed us the breakdown of both a 70 lb. lamb and a 227lb. hog. A lot of good questions were asked and answered about how the different cut sheet options affect each other. Cody did a great job of demonstrating the different options on the cut sheet and gave visual examples of roast weights. Likewise, he showed attendees how little trim is available on a lamb carcass due to the type of cuts that are usually chosen, leaving not much for ground lamb. Many different cutting options were demonstrated over the course of the 2 ½ hour class. Thanks to a SARE grant, and participant fees, RIRLA had no expenses for the cut workshops.

We are in the process of planning another Beef and another Lamb/Hog Workshop in the Spring due to the popularity of both. Look for the workshop dates by early 2012.

Windmist Farm Pasture Walk

The Windmist Farm Pasture Walk was Oct. 8, 2011 at 3:00 under sunny skies and unseasonably warm temperatures. Approximately 20 people attended. Martha Neale started with a demonstration of how they set up for an outdoor farmers market with tent, table, signs, coolers, etc. The group then moved into the farm's retail space to have a look in the chest freezers and refrigerator, talk about hours and the use of a credit card terminal. We then moved to a spot within wifi range for a view of Farm Fresh RI's

Market Mobile site on a laptop, another way Martha markets, particularly to restaurants. After a look in the walk-in cooler and freezer we had a tour of the farm, discussing the cows, meat birds, turkeys, layer hens, and guard dog. There was a break for some refreshments, which included apple cider and grilled sausages all made at or from the farm, after which some of the group continued across the road to the Neale's leased fields to see the sheep and the pigs.

SVF Tour

On a steamy July afternoon, twenty-five RIRLA members left the mainland and headed toward Swiss Valley Farm in Newport, hoping to find a cool ocean breeze to finish off the day on our private tour. What we saw ahead as we crossed the Jamestown Bridge was an island completely encapsulated with fog. Crossing the Newport Bridge with the "fog warning" signs flashing away, we descended onto Aquidneck Island with the eerie appearance of only half a bridge hanging in the air behind us. The accompanying temperature drop to a relatively chilly 73 degrees added to the feeling of entering another place entirely. Driving through narrow cobblestone streets, bordered by centuries-old homes, one couldn't help but feel transported.

Passing through the huge stone gates at the entrance to SVF, we were met by Rocky Steeves, one of their managers. Because of the biosecurity concerns at SVF, the large automatic gates are routinely kept closed to avoid unwanted intrusion. Driving down a long driveway toward the castle-like structures, it was hard to believe that we were on a farm. In 1998 the property was auctioned and purchased by Mrs. Dorrance Hill Hamilton and a partner. With the intention of creating a farm for the conservation of heritage breeds, the property was subdivided so that the Village could become the primary campus for the Foundation. Following an extensive two-year restoration, SVF Foundation collaborated with Tufts' Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine and began its mission of cryopreservation.

Once everyone had arrived, we walked through a disinfecting foot bath and put on plastic booties to keep everything clean. Meeting in the main building, which was once the dairy barn but is now a stunning office and meeting space, we were greeted by Livestock Manager Sarah Bowley and Peter Borden, Executive Director of SVF. Our members were shown a slide show to further illustrate Sarah and Peter's points about diversity, or the lack thereof, in agriculture today. This is well demonstrated by the fact that 95% of the dairy cows in the USA today today are Holsteins or Holstein crosses. They also provide about 95% of all our dairy products here in the U.S. Were a Holstein specific disease or illness to strike, milk production would be at a standstill. The same is true for other breeds of livestock that are major players in today's food supply system. What SVF is doing is to create a 'worst case scenario' plan by having semen and embryos from the rarer, and hardier, breeds that are fading out of existence. These hardy breeds no longer have the production value of the modernized livestock, so large scale producers no longer raise them.

SVF's goal is to have 300 embryos and 3000 straws of semen for each of the breeds in their nitrogen storage tanks. If the need arose to rebuild herds of livestock, embryos would be implanted in host dams. SVF scientists assume a 50% success rate and of those 150 embryos, roughly 75 would be female. In this way, assured of different genetic lines through the use of 30 females and 10 males of each breed, herds could be rebuilt or at least reinforced by the introduction of new stock even hundreds of years in the future.

RIRLA's tour of SVF was incredibly rewarding. If we had visited purely for the architecture and the history, it would have been satisfying. But the fact that the purpose served by SVF is so forward thinking and important made this tour one I will never forget. I highly recommend attending their Annual Visitor's Day on June 16, 2012 or looking for next year's RIRLA tour information on our website and in the email blast.

Processing Schedule

The following shows processing availability for BEEF through the end of October.

There is availability for pork, lamb, veal and goats each week shown below.

To check current availability and/or to schedule animals, call Heidi at 401-575-3348 or email: riraied@gmail.com.

January 3, 2012 Tuesday
CLOSED to BEEF, LAMB Limited

January 10, 2012 Tuesday
5 Beef Slots Open

January 17, 2012 Tuesday
8 Beef Slots Open

January 24, 2012 Tuesday
8 Beef Slots Open

January 31, 2012 Tuesday
8 Beef Slots Open

February 7, 2012 Tuesday
8 Beef Slots Available

February 14, 2012 Tuesday
8 Beef Slots Available

February 21, 2012 Tuesday
8 Beef Slots Available

February 28, 2012 Tuesday
8 Beef Slots Available

Cut Sheets Request From Bruno

While the majority of cut sheets are faxed or emailed to Bruno by the slaughter date, some are being sent the following week when Westerly Packing is actually cutting the animals. As directed in the Email Confirmation that is sent each time animals are scheduled, Bruno has asked me to remind all farms that the cut sheets must be sent in on time. As our processing numbers are increasing, the weekly loads are sometimes huge. October 18 we shipped 44 animals, November 29 was 48 animals and our November 15 load totaled 59 animals! If animals are to be cut to order, Bruno needs to be able to plan ahead and make sure that he has sufficient cutters in to do the work. Most of you send the cut sheets in on time, but Bruno has stressed to me the importance of others getting them to him on time.

If you make sure that the cut sheets are faxed or emailed on the date you deliver your animals to Johnston, it will always be early enough. If you already send them in by the processing date, thank you for doing your part to ensure a good relationship between RIRLA and Westerly Packing.

Calendar

RIRLA Monthly Meetings are currently being held at:

Louitit Library Community Center
274 Victory Highway
West Greenwich, RI
(adjacent to the West Greenwich Police Department)
There will be no December meeting.

Monday, January 30, 2012 6:30p.m.

(Note new time for winter months.)

Monday, February 27, 2012 6:30 p.m.

Opportunities/Resources Holistic Management Trainings

Manage your farm profitably, enjoyably, and ecologically

Have you reached the end of the "busy season" exhausted, at odds with your family and business partners, and dreading tax season? Are you convinced this let-down is just "part of farming"? Make next year different. Attend our interactive Holistic Management Trainings and learn how.

- December 9, 2011
Problem solving with HM
- January 20, 2012
Problem solving with HM
- February 3, 2012
Financial Planning with HM

- March 2, 2012

Financial Planning with HM

(Despite the similar titles, all workshops are unique, although they do build upon each other if you choose to attend more than one — Heidi)

All training sessions run from 8:00am to 4:00pm

Location: URI's East Farm, Bldg. #75, Kingston, RI 02881

Cost: \$20/person/workshop (lunch included)

Guest Speaker: Seth Wilner, farmer and University of New Hampshire Extension Educator specializing in soil fertility, nutrient management, strategic planning, and marketing.

RSVP at least 1 week prior to each workshop to:

Kristen Castrataro

kcas@uri.edu or phone:

401-874-2967/401-256-7393

Make checks payable to URI and mail to:

Kristen Castrataro,

URI Cooperative Extension

3 E. Alumni Avenue

Kingston, RI 02881

This event is part of a USDA/

Northeast SARE grant: Taking in the Whole Picture: Incorporating Holistic Management on RI's Farms led by Kristen Castrataro.

URI provides equal program opportunity. Persons with disabilities needing special accommodations should contact us prior to this event.

SUNY Cobleskill Meat Processing and Food Safety Certificate Lab
Monday-Friday, January 2, 2012 to January 27, 2012

For more information, go to SUNY Cobleskill Continuing Education Registration Meat Processing Lab. Off campus housing assistance is available if you are interested in taking this class. \$2995



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Jake (Cell) 1-860-625-0676
Fax 1-860-599-2968

View "American Meat" Saturday, January 21, 2012

Screening of the documentary
"American Meat", Louttit Library, 274
Victory Highway, West Greenwich, RI.
Donation of \$5 per person. Doors
open at 5:00 pm. Please RSVP to
Heidi at riraised@gmail.com.

RIRLA Annual Meeting Monday, March 19, 2012

RIRLA will hold its Annual Meeting
at the Coventry-West Greenwich Elks
hall.

RIRLA Annual Farm Supper Saturday, May 12, 2012

The RIRLA Annual Farm Supper
Fundraiser will be held this year at
Addieville East Farm in Mapleville, RI.
www.addieville.com

Classifieds

Sheep Shearing and Farm Work

For quality sheep shearing, dependable
and competent farm sitting and farm
work, call on Brittany Sederback at:
401-678-6915 or agiwanuku@yahoo.com.
If you need help with shearing, or want
to take a well-deserved vacation, give her
a try!



New Product Tip

Gamma Seal Lids

Martha Neale brought this product to
our attention after her son gave her a few
lids to use on buckets at Windmist Farm,
with pleasing results:

As advertised on one site: "Why throw
away a perfectly good bucket when you
now can Gamma Seal it? The Gamma
Seal lid permanently transforms your
12 diameter bucket into an airtight leak
proof storage container. Now a bucket
can be used for hundreds of household
storage applications such as storing pet
food, dry goods, paint, hardware, or
even boating and camping supplies! Sim-
ply snap the patented adapter onto your
bucket and spin on the removable lid.
Specially engineered gaskets ensure that
the lid and adapter are properly sealed to
guarantee airtight protection."

Gamma Seal lids are available from
many sites online, in multiple colors, and
prices seem to range from \$3.99 and up,
depending on quantity purchased.



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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 begins at \$40 per RI farm,
includes the newsletter and free classifieds on
our website – www.rirla.org. We also accept
unsolicited donations. RIRLA News welcomes
articles, photographs, letters and classified
advertising for possible publication. Publication
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RIRLA Sponsorship and Advertising Information

Sponsorship

Cost: \$250/issue

Ad size: Full page plus special
acknowledgement

Distribution: Over 225 RI, MA and CT
farms and farm related businesses

Published: Quarterly - January, April,
July, October

Advertisements

(Dimensions: width x height)

Business card – 3-1/2" x 2"

Cost: One time rate: \$25
4X rate: \$85 (4 issues)

1/4 page ad – 3-1/2" x 4-3/4"

Cost: One time rate: \$50
4X rate: \$175 (4 issues)

1/2 page ad – 7-1/2" x 5"

Cost: One time rate: \$75
4X rate: \$250 (4 issues)

Classifieds: 25¢/word