

Commissioner's Column

A Time for Change at DFA

by Jonathan L. Healy

With the start of the New Year, I wanted to let you know of some changes that will be taking place in our Department.

Janet Lafond, my outstanding Chief of Staff and ardent supporter of agriculture is retiring after many years of public service. She will be sorely missed. Kent Lage will be leaving as Director of the Farm Viability Program to become my new Chief of Staff. He will move into the Boston office. His phone number is 617-626-1702.

Craig Richov, who has been the Director of the Agro-Environmental Technology Grant and Massachusetts Emergency Food Assistance Programs, will be taking over the Farm Viability Program. We will be closing the Easthampton Farm Viability office and it will be transferred to the DFA office in Lancaster. The new phone number for the Farm Viability Program and Craig will be 508-792-7712, extension 14.

Susan Phinney will be taking over responsibility for the Agro-Environmental Technology Grant program, since Craig Richov will be moving over to Farm Viability. She will also continue to administer the Agricultural Environmental Enhancement Program.

It is sad for me that Janet Lafond will be leaving our Department. We all wish her our very best, however, and hope that the Lafonds enjoy some of the great trips (and fishing!) that they have postponed for many years. I feel fortunate that we have folks like Kent, Craig, and Susan who will be able to do the job well, even though we can't replace Janet's inimitable bedrock style!

And lastly, we hope you enjoy this new look for the *Farm & Market Report*.

March is Mass. Maple Month!

Twenty-six restaurants, from Boston to the Berkshires, have teamed up with 17 Bay State maple sugar producers to celebrate Massachusetts Maple Month this March. The restaurants are featuring special maple menus and events as part of a promotion coordinated by the Massachusetts Maple Producers Association and the Massachusetts Department of Food and Agriculture.



A listing of participating restaurants and sugarhouses is available on the Web at www.massmaple.org or by calling toll-free 1-877-MASSGROWN (1-877-627-7476). A brochure featuring maple recipes is also available.

"Massachusetts Maple Month not only highlights the fact that the Bay State has an active maple sugaring industry, but also that maple syrup can be an interesting ingredient in many types of cuisine,"

explains Jonathan L. Healy, state Commissioner of Food and Agriculture. "Professional and amateur cooks alike are learning that maple syrup is more than just a topping for pancakes and waffles."

March brings the Commonwealth's yearly agricultural awakening as the warm days and cold nights of late winter start the sap running and maple sugar makers take to the woods with buckets, taps and tubing.

Massachusetts' more than 200 maple farmers produce between 40,000 and 50,000 gallons of syrup annually at a value of \$1.6 million to \$2 million. Many sugarhouses welcome visitors.

For more information on maple sugaring in Massachusetts, visit the Mass. Maple Producers Association web site at www.massmaple.org. ▲

Mass. Bred Cow Sets State Record

Smithson Odin Raisinette recently completed her fifth lactation and it was a record breaker. Raisinette, as she is known, is owned by Jerry & Mary Smith of Smithson Holsteins, North Brookfield, Massachusetts. She is managed with out special treatment as part of their herd of Registered Holsteins.

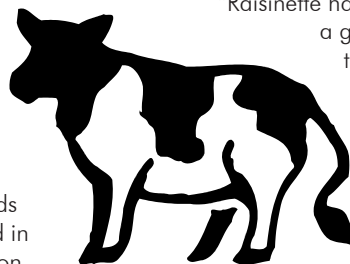
Raisinette's record places her first in the state for milk production at 43,370 pounds produced in a year, and third in the state for protein production, at 1263 pounds, in the mature cow category.

Raisinette produced 5,043 gallons in this lactation or enough to feed a family of four for 50 years. An average mature Holstein cow produces 23,675 pounds of milk in 305 days. One gallon of milk weighs 8.6 pounds.

The Smiths milk 35 cows twice daily in a California style parlor in the basement

of a barn built in the 1800's. The cows are housed on a bedded pack and Bovine Growth Hormones are not used in the herd.

"Raisinette has a tremendous will to milk, a great disposition and is the trouble free kind of cow that makes farming enjoyable," Jerry said.



One of the most interesting aspects of this record is Raisinette's lineage. She is the great - great granddaughter

of a cow that Mary and Jerry purchased in July 1971 from the Grafton State Hospital Herd in Grafton, Massachusetts. They paid \$500 for the original cow (Pearl) as a bred heifer. Ninety percent of their herd is now descended from her with Raisinette being the fifth generation and so far the most outstanding. ▲

2001 Ag. Business Training Courses Fully Enrolled

With one class in its third week of a 10-session program, and another starting on February 6, DFA's Director of the Agricultural Business Training Program (ABTP) Rick Chandler is already taking names for next year.

This year, 30 Agricultural businesses in the Southeast region will explore their expansion and/or change options using the NxLevel™ "Tilling The Soil of Opportunity" curriculum, with the goal being a completed business plan and better understanding of each farm's business context.

Current attendees come from a broad range of pursuits, including shellfish aquaculture, cranberries, vegetables, nursery, sheep, cut flowers, orchard, apiary, turkeys, compost and greenhouse operation. Individual supplemental technical assistance in problem areas identified during the course is an extra DFA service to course participants.

Course instructors are drawn from agricultural and financial backgrounds, and go on to complete intensive training in using the curriculum. Local guest speakers are featured in more than half the sessions.

Future course locations will be determined by the demand in a given region, with plans to rotate 3 courses per year around the state. The ABTP is also working with interested commodity associations and other delivery partners to develop special stand-alone sessions on some business topics.

Our thanks this season go to our course instructors (Rick Connole, Michael Lehan and Dale Leavitt), our regional Program Manager (Carol Hansen of SEMAP and NRCS) and our location hosts (UMass Dartmouth and the Mass. Maritime Academy). The program's office is located at UMass Amherst.

Please contact Rick for more information about taking, teaching or coordinating a course in your region during the next program window (January-March, 2002). Phone 413-577-0459 or e-mail: rchandler@umext.umass.edu. ▲

BOOKMARK IT!

UMass Extension's Landscape, Nursery and Urban Forestry Program has launched a new web site at www.umassgreeninfo.org to serve landscapers, lawn care operators, arborists, nursery crop producers and other horticultural professionals.

Farm-City Connections

School Gardening Conference Draws Enthusiastic Crowd

More than seventy educators turned out January 27th for the "Growing Minds through School Gardens" conference held at UMass Boston. The enthused gardening group gathered ideas and resources at the gathering convened by the Mass. Department of Food and Agriculture and UMass Extension. Also participating were Mass. Agriculture in the Classroom, UMass Amherst School of Education, Mass. Department of Education, Mass. Horticultural Society, Mass. Nursery & Landscape Assoc., National Gardening Assoc. and Executive Office of Environmental Affairs.

Most teachers connect the skills used in gardening to other parts of the curriculum, according to the school survey reported by Will Snyder, UMass Extension. Many link gardening to science and technology courses, while others link with math, social sciences, nutrition and even foreign languages. Students who may not respond to traditional teaching methods may be more open to learning with these techniques, Snyder said. The survey of teachers across the state showed that 174 schools have a gardening project of some type and 142 have interest in starting one.

David Horton, retired principal of Estabrook School, Lexington, encouraged schools to reach out to the community. His group raised \$41,000 to help build and maintain a new 24 by 18-foot outdoor greenhouse. "Resident expert" is Harold Millican, former owner of Lexington Gardens; greenhouse committee also includes parents, teachers and staff.

Nutrition is one of the topics highlighted at the Harrington and Haggerty schools in Cambridge. Jane Smillie of City Sprouts described how curriculum covers "from seed to sprout" and students' projects reflect the theme of "where their food comes from". School gardens consultant Linda Fuchs of Brimfield encourages teachers and students to map out their school grounds. Often the parents roto-till with students' help. To assist, nurseries need to know what is the project you are doing, and what they could donate.

Ed Bemis of Bemis Farms Nursery, Spencer, suggested that the list of what you're looking for should be on paper. Contributing to school projects can even help nurseries feel good about themselves, but they need to know what the program is all about.

Josh Wright of Garden Craft, Hanover, stressed the advantages of collaboration with schools. Nurseries should want to hear from you-- but not in May! He also suggested teachers write in advance of grants to obtain trees from town tree wardens.

For more information and resources, phone Janet Christensen, 617-626-1735, or e-mail: jchristensen@state.ma.us. ▲

Fertilizer Sampling Program, 2000

The Department's Bureau of Farm Products and Plant Industries inspectors sampled 404 fertilizer products between March 1 and June 30, 2000. Samples were taken at blending plants and retail establishments throughout the Commonwealth. Samples were analyzed for their Nitrogen, Phosphorous and Potassium guaranteed analysis at Spectrum Analytic, Inc., Washington, Ohio.

Fifty different fertilizer brands were included in sampling in fiscal year 2000. Following Association of American Plant Food Control Officials protocol for investigational allowances, 29 percent or 116 of the 404 samples were deemed deficient. Fertilizer penalty assessments totaling \$17,000 were issued and collected.

Penalty assessment payments were sent directly to farmers when those samples were found deficient. Stop Sale Orders were issued on 6 fertilizer products and 3 manure and humus type products for non-compliance and/or false and misleading labeling.

For information on fertilizer product sampling contact Bob Rondeau, Bureau of Farm Products & Plant Industries at 617-626-1804. ▲

Migrant Education Available

The Massachusetts Department of Education has contracted with EDCO Collaborative, a public non-profit entity, to serve as sub-grantee and operator of the Massachusetts Migrant Education Program (MMEP).



This federally funded program establishes or improves education for children of qualifying migrant workers through state education agencies.

MMEP provides educational opportunities for eligible migrant children, assists them to succeed in regular school program, attain grade level proficiency, meet high expectations and performance standards held for all children.

For details on the migrant education program and eligibility requirements, call 1-800-234-8848. ▲

Highway Signs Steer In Customers

The Ag-Directional Signage program is working well for the farms and orchards that have had blue Tourist-Oriented Directional signs erected on state roadways. To date 28 signs have been installed.

Although hard figures are not available, farms are reporting that the signs have helped to increase business.

"The signs have brought us new customers and our business has increased markedly," notes Jean Bashista of Bashista Orchards of Southampton.

Outpost farm of Holliston also reports that their signs on the highly traveled Rt. 16 reinforce their advertising in local newspapers.

For more information on the highway sign applications please contact Anneli Johnson at 617-626-1755, anneli.johnson@state.ma.us. ▲

Truck Decals Offered



The New England Vegetable and Berry Growers Association is

offering vinyl decals and magnetic signs with the "Massachusetts grown...and fresher!" logo which can be attached to vehicles.

The decals and signs feature a five-color logo on a white oval and three options are available. The vinyl "crack and peel" oval logos are available in two sizes, 12x24 and 24x48 inches. The magnetic rectangular signs are 12x24 inches.

The vinyl decals are applied to vehicle surfaces permanently. The magnetic signs can be adhered and removed as needed. The farm name can be added for an additional fee.

For details, contact the New England Vegetable and Berry Growers Association, 233 Union Street, East Bridgewater, MA 02333, 508-378-2546. ▲

Farmers' Market Opportunities

The Parker Hill/Fenway Farmers' Market in Boston is seeking vendors with flowers, fruit and breads for the 2001 season. The market is held Thursdays from Noon to 6:00 pm. For more information contact Milagros Arbaje at 617-445-6000 or Maggie Cohen at 617-427-7399.

Farmers/vendors wanted for greater Worcester farmers' markets, Mon., Tue., Thu., in Worcester, Shrewsbury or Sturbridge. Call Andy O'Keefe, 800-448-0045.

How to Cut Costs at US Trade Shows

USDA's Market Access Program Participants will reimburse 50 percent of the cost for a wide variety of activities for eligible participants. For example, half of the cost of participation in some US trade shows with international buyers in attendance can be reimbursed for companies new to the show or who haven't participated in the past three years. Shows on the list include the Fancy Food Shows, NRA, Natural Products, Kosherfest, US Food Export Showcase and others.

Half the cost of plates and a year's supply of labels designed for a foreign market can be reimbursed. And 50 percent of the cost of travel to international shows for exhibiting companies can be reimbursed. In addition, advertising, marketing materials, in-store demonstrations and other promotional costs are eligible. For more information, contact Bonita Oehlke, 617-626-1753, Bonita.Oehlke@state.ma.us. ▲

Exhibit at the Fancy Food Show, NYC

It's not too early to make plans to join the Massachusetts Pavilion at the Summer Fancy Food Show, July 8 - 10, New York City. In order to participate, you must be a member of the National Association of Specialty Food Trade. Call 800-627-3869 for an application.

The Massachusetts pavilion includes some 2,700 square feet. Space is available. Contact Bonita Oehlke - 617-626-1753 or bonita.oehlke@state.ma.us. ▲

NE Products Show

The 17th annual New England Products Trade Show will be held March 11-13 at the Cumberland County Civic Center and the Portland Exposition Building in Portland, Maine. This annual event features a juried selection of giftware and specialty food from all six New England states. It is a non-profit event dedicated to the success of small businesses.

Join 300 companies displaying giftware and specialty food for over 2,000 national and international buyers! New features this year are a section for service vendors, and Cash and Carry day on the final day of the show.

For details visit www.nepts.com or contact Peter Myer or Vitas Normantas at Giraffe Events at 207-781-5756, info@giraffeevents.com. ▲

CLASSIFIED

Help wanted: CDL/Class A driver, Wilson Farms, Lexington, MA. Drive to airport, load, stack & unload produce & cut flowers. Nights & weekends. 781-862-3900.

16' van truck 1969, C50, 8 cyl., 350 motor gas, 2 speed trans., excellent condition & tires, w. sticker. Hibbards, Hadley 413-549-5684.

For sale: 1 1/2 in. gear honey pump motor & ball gate valve \$500. 55 gal. drum heater \$250. Drum handling truck \$175. Hard carrier \$35. Swarm catcher/bee blower, new motor, \$250. Broff's Honey Prods, 978-774-3035.

Greenhouses for lease. 3 hses 8,000 sq. ft. tot. Computer controlled heat & vent. Rolling benches, auto. watering, trolley system. Price negot. 508-528-6862.

For sale: used (old, unusual) books and ephemera relating to agriculture, gardening, beekeeping. Nancy L. Dole, PO Box 74, Shelburne Falls, MA 01370, 413-625-2210, ndole@crocker.com.

For sale: proven purebred Romney ram - dob 3/6/99. Sire: Barnes6298, dam: Moosehills Gladys 6410. Sell/\$200 or trade for proven Romney ram or Romney ram lamb. 413-743-7916, tnsadin@banet.net.

1 Fairbanks platform scale, 1000 lb., \$150. 1 Winco 25 KW PTO genrtr, 110 & 220 volt, tlr mounted, very prtble, \$2,200. Lrg box type fan w/1hp motor, \$100. All v/good cond. 781-944-9161 days, 978-851-5939 eves.

For sale: IH 584 4 wheel drive, 52 PTO hp loader, under 2000 hrs, \$15,000. Case IH 685 2 wheel drive, 62 PTO hp, 1600 hrs Curtis cab. Village Power Equip., Berlin, MA 978-838-2484.

For sale: corn silage. North Attleboro, 508-699-2153.

Business solutions for the food and ag. industry. Business planning and financing assistance. Experienced. References. Send for brochure. Woody Pratt, Sherwood Consultants, Brookline, MA 617-232-8818, fax 617-277-0126, spratt@quik.com.

Plastic mulch: Now taking orders for spring. Black or clear. Call for pricing. Empire Packaging 508-426-7813.

Bee Equipment: 300 10-frame 9 5/8" boxes w/9 comb \$10 each. 100 10-frame 6 5/8" boxes w/ 9 comb \$7 each. Call 508-763-9584, rberndt@tmlp.com.

Fencing, 1x1 welded, 4' wide, 1M ft.; 1" chicken wire, 5' wide, 1M ft.; 2" flight netting, 50' wide, 300' long; 50 treated 4x6's, 10' long; turkey feeders, new. 413-562-3155.

For Sale: One Icelandic ram, 4 bred ewes. Nice color variety; moorit lambs possible. Northampton. Contact droeder@javanet.com; Diane @ 413-586-4822

Opportunity for exp. farmer/organic vegetable grower. Possible future partnership interest. Hutchins Farm, Concord, MA, 978-369-5041, hutchfarm@earthlink.net.

Seeking assist. farm mngr & interns. Could evolve into Y/R mgt pos. or partnership. Expanding onto new 50 acre farm in Granby, MA. Org. vegs, fruits, flowers & grnhse crops w/emphasis on retail & CSA. Ryan, 413-367-2395.

Wanted: 6 NH Red pullets from local farm. I live in Northampton, MA. droeder@javanet.com or 413-586-4822.

How to Place a Classified Ad

Classified ads are accepted free-of charge on a first-come basis. Limit: 25 words. Be sure to include a phone number. No display ads will be accepted. Only one ad per business/individual per issue, unless space permits. Ads may run in consecutive issues, space permitting.

Ads must be of interest to Massachusetts farmers. The Mass. Dept. of Food and Agriculture reserves the right to refuse any listing it deems inappropriate for publication.

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Diane Baedeker Petit, Editor, Farm & Market Report

This publication is available in alternate formats upon request.

1st New England Farmers' Direct Marketing Conference Slated

It's about time for a New England Farmers' Direct Marketing Conference and Trade Show! This first of its kind regional conference will be held Feb. 26-28 at the Holiday Inn & Conference Center, Manchester, NH.

Whether you're a seasoned farm direct marketer, are dreaming about being one or are somewhere in between, you'll leave this conference with your head full of ideas.

calendar 2001

Feb. 22 - Nutrient Management Workshop, American Legion, Hatfield. Call the New England Small Farm Institute at 413-323-4531 or e-mail info@smallfarm.org for details.

Feb. 26-28 - New England Farm Direct Marketing Conference, Holiday Inn & Conference Center, Manchester, NH. Contact Charlie Touchette, 413-529-0386.

March 1 - Nutrient Management Workshop, Whites Restaurant, Westport. Call the New England Small Farm Institute at 413-323-4531 or e-mail info@smallfarm.org for details.

March 8 - Nutrient Management Workshop, Quality Inn, Lenox. Call the New England Small Farm Institute at 413-323-4531 or e-mail info@smallfarm.org for details.

March 15 - Nutrient Management Workshop, USDA office, Holden. Call the New England Small Farm Institute at 413-323-4531 or e-mail info@smallfarm.org for details.

March 17-25 - New England Spring Flower Show at the Bayside Expo Center, Boston. Sponsored by the Mass. Horticultural Society. Call 617-536-9280 for details.

March 26 & 27 - Massachusetts Sheep & Woolcraft Fair at Cummington Fairgrounds. For information on participating or attending, contact Becky Peterson, Orchard Valley Farm, 413-624-5562 or visit www.masheepwool.org

March 27 - Agriculture Day at the State House. Farmers visit with their legislators to discuss issues, speaking program at the Grand Staircase, and Taste of Massachusetts Reception in the Great Hall. Contact Mary Jordan, 617-626-1754, mary.moffitt@state.ma.us for details.

The conference will feature 24 different sessions divided into the following tracks: roadside stands and pick-your-own; farmers' markets; specialty foods and processing; beginning farmers; and ag-tourism. For registration information, call Charlie Touchette, 413-529-9232.

The conference is sponsored by the Mass. Assoc. of Roadside Stands and Pick-Your-Own and the Federation of Mass. Farmers' Markets, with assistance from many other associations, state departments of agriculture and Extension Programs throughout New England. ▲

Bedding Plants, Spring 2001

- **Thursday March 1**, 9:00 am to 1:00 pm, Eastern Mass Extension Center, 240 Beaver St., Waltham
- **Thursday, March 8**, 9:00 am to 1:00 pm, Mullins Center, UMass, Amherst, MA

Bedding Plants - Spring 2001, sponsored by UMass Extension, will be held at two locations. Management strategies for insects and diseases will be reviewed. Pesticide recertification credit has been approved for 4 hours. Registration fee: \$15. Contact: Tina Smith 413-545-5306 or Paul Lopes 508-295-2212 x24.

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