

## March 2008

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## What is "All-Natural" Beef?

by Dona Funk

Natural and organic beef dollar sales comprise 2.1 percent of all fresh beef sales in retail supermarkets. The natural and organic beef share of sales is trending upward, from a low of 1.1 percent in the second quarter of 2003 to 2.1 percent in the first quarter of 2007. In addition, sales of natural and organic beef in retail are rapidly increasing (28.5% in 2006, up from 17.2% in 2005) compared to all beef sales (up just 0.4% in 2006).



Natural is defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as "a product containing no artificial ingredient or added color and is only minimally processed (a process which does not fundamentally alter the raw product) may be labeled natural. The label must explain the use of the term natural (such as no added colorings or artificial

ingredients or minimally processed)." Consequently, every beef company who markets an "all natural" product has actively promoted their own definition of "all natural" beef based on the combination of various animal husbandry attributes that appeals to their desired consumer audience. Some of the various attributes attached to a specific brand label may include the prohibited use of growth implants, antimicrobial feed additives and antibiotics, specific breed types, forage finishing and humane handling.

While there are definite opportunities for greater returns from calves raised and marketed through these alternative management strategies, there are risks that must be factored in as well. First, all producers must understand and document compliance to the strict guidelines which exist for participating in each program. One must pay very close attention to the records required while the animals are in your custody as well as the necessary paper trail required when ownership transfer is completed to ensure there is no "fall out" of cattle eligibility.

It is very important for producers to recognize that costs of gain will be significantly increased through reduced daily gains, lowered feed efficiency and, potentially, higher death loss if growth implants and antibiotics such as Rumensin are not incorporated throughout the stocker and finishing phase. Strict attention to bunk management and the increase in roughages level while in the feedlot will be necessary to offset the higher likelihood of digestive upsets and resulting liver abscess rates which may consequently impact performance and carcass merit. It is critical for producers to anticipate and manage these aspects of managing cattle to fit natural and certified organic branded beef programs.

## Budgeting Spreadsheets

by David Whitson

Now is a good time to sit down and look at your enterprise budgets if you have not done so already. Listed below are some helpful University of Missouri web sites that list budgets for 2008. You can download them so that you can enter your own figures if you download the XL version.

**2008 Livestock, Crop and Forage Budgets** can be found at:

<http://agebb.missouri.edu/mgt/budget/index.htm>

**In addition, the Food and Agriculture Policy Institute (FAPRI) generate budgets to represent medium sized farms.**

Their budgets can be accessed at:

[http://www.fapri.missouri.edu/farmers\\_corner/budgets/index.asp?current\\_page=farmers\\_corner](http://www.fapri.missouri.edu/farmers_corner/budgets/index.asp?current_page=farmers_corner)

**FAPRI also has a Budget Generator you can download.**

It can be found at:

[http://www.fapri.missouri.edu/farmers\\_corner/tools/index.asp?current\\_page=farmers\\_corner](http://www.fapri.missouri.edu/farmers_corner/tools/index.asp?current_page=farmers_corner)

## Home Office Deduction

by David Whitson

Many farmers do have an office in their home. The IRS allows you to do that (and deduct expenses) assuming it is for an office. Offices on the kitchen table or the bedroom dresser do not meet their criteria. You can take off as a business expenses your computer and office supplies that are used for the business office. It should not be the computer that your kids use to play games and communicate non farm business on. This is an area the IRS monitors fairly close so be sure you're doing it right.

## Strawberry Mulch Removal

by John Hobbs

It's close to time to remove the mulch from your strawberries. The straw mulch should be removed from strawberry plants when the soil temperature is about 40 degrees F. Fruit production drops if the mulch remains as the soil temperature increases. There are likely to be freezing temperatures that will injure or kill blossoms, so keep the mulch between rows to conveniently recover the berries when freezing temperatures are predicted.

K-State Source

## New Missouri Minimum Wage

by David Whitson

Effective January 1, 2008, Missouri's new minimum wage is \$6.65 per hour. All businesses are required to pay this rate except retail and service businesses whose annual gross sales are less than \$500,000. There are also certain classes of employees under the definition of employee in Section 290.500(3), RSMo and pertaining to agriculture in Section 290.507, RSMo, to which Missouri's law does not apply.

The minimum wage rate will increase or decrease on January 1 of successive years based on the increase or decrease in the cost of living as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI). Tipped employees' compensation must total at least \$6.65 per hour and employers of these employees are required to pay them at least 50% of the minimum wage.

Anyone under 20 years of age may be deemed a learner or apprentice and paid the applicable training wage which can not be less than .90 under the minimum wage for three consecutive months. Records are required for each employee entailing their name, address, job description, rate of pay, amount paid each period and the number of hours worked each day and workweek. These records need to be kept for at least 3 years and are open for inspection by the Missouri Division of Labor Standards.

# Fruit Trees Need Pollinators

by John Hobbs

Fruit and nut trees have flowers that must be pollinated before fruit will develop. Nut trees are pollinated by the wind, but fruit trees are pollinated by bees. If you are planning a fruit planting, be sure to check to see if the cultivars (varieties) you are buying require a second cultivar as a source of pollen. It is important to understand that the different source of pollen is from a different cultivar, not a second plant or tree of the same cultivar. For example, Jonathan apple cannot be pollinated by another Jonathan but rather another cultivar such as Golden Delicious. Cultivars of apples, sweet cherries, pears, Japanese plums, blueberries and elderberries generally need a second cultivar for a pollen source. There are some exceptions such as Golden Delicious apple and Stella sweet cherry that are self pollinating, and one tree is sufficient. Apricots, tart or pie cherry, European plum, peach, nectarine, blackberry, raspberry, currant, gooseberry, grape and strawberry plants are all self pollinating, and only one tree or plant is adequate for pollination and fruit development.

If you have only one fruit tree that requires a pollinator, you can fool mother nature. Prune off a bouquet of blossoms from another cultivar of the same species. Place the bouquet in a container of water, transport it to your tree, and hang it on the sunny side of the tree that needs to be pollinated. The bees will move from the flowers in the bouquet to the flowers in the tree and pollinate them. The trees must be blooming at the same time, and the bouquet should be replaced every two or three days to keep the flowers fresh and the pollen viable.

# How to Select the Best Replacement Tree for Those Damaged by Storm

by Gaylord Moore

Horticulture Specialist, Greene County

The most positive approach to tree selection is to decide where a tree is needed and what that tree should do in the landscape.

Is the goal to have shade, spring blooms or fall colors? Are power lines nearby or overhead? All of these questions are important and should be answered before the tree species is purchased for planting.

Consider the maximum height of the tree at maturity. Do you have room to allow for the height and spread of the tree? The growth rate of the tree may be important too. Generally the faster the growth rate of the tree, the more susceptible the tree is to storm damage.

The purchaser should also be aware of pest problems – insects and diseases – and consider maintenance expenses of the tree. When possible, choose tree species that are highly resistant to pests.

It is also important to remember that soils in the Ozarks can be either poorly drained or overly dry. Be aware of your existing soil conditions and choose a species that will perform well under your situation. If soils are extremely poor, consider trees that are adaptable or amend soils to best meet the needs of the tree.

There is no perfect tree for every situation, but obviously, the recent ice storm in southwest Missouri is a reminder that planting the wrong tree in the wrong location can have consequences.

## Using Old Garden Seed

by John Hobbs

With the seed catalogs arriving in abundance and with the first warm days of the new year, many of us are thinking about spring and our gardens. Garden seed is expensive, so if you were happy with last year's seed take stock in your leftover seed before placing orders or selecting new seed for this year's garden. Most vegetables and flowers have seed that is viable or will germinate for about three years. There are a few exceptions in vegetables in the "carrot" family including carrots, parsnips, and parsley. These are short-lived seeds and are good for one to two years. Most flower seed can be held for more than one year if properly stored. Most seed if stored in cold, dark, and dry locations will be just fine for planting this year. It will save you some money as well as using up some seed that might be thrown away.

# Brewin' Your Own (Fuel That Is)

by Ed Browning

Some of us are proponents of on-farm fuel production -- particularly biodiesel. Biodiesel is probably the most feasible fuel to produce on-farm. First, there are generally three crops that can be used; soybeans, sunflowers and canola. Additionally, most of the engines used on the farm are diesel. There are exceptions, but for the most part they're diesel. With grain ethanol, corn is the main crop. That can change as cellulosic ethanol processes are developed.

A basic argument by those who are not proponents is that fuel quality can not be maintained with homemade production. Besides the quality issue, there are other concerns that need attention before one invests heavily in the do-it-yourself process. Here is a list of questions that need answers before you set up a processing facility. An attempt will be made to answer some of these.

## **Do you have to have a license to produce biodiesel?**

A license is not required by the Missouri Department of Agriculture, Division of Weights and Measures to produce fuel for your own use, but it does regulate fuel quality. It is responsible to enforce Missouri Revised Statutes, Section 414.032, which states that "all kerosene, diesel fuel, heating oil, aviation turbine fuel, gasoline, gasoline-alcohol blends and other motor fuels" have to meet ASTM standards. Additionally, "...gasoline, gasoline-alcohol blends or other motor fuels [may be inspected] to insure that these fuels conform to advertised grade and octane." According to a representative of Weights and Measures, testing to comply with ASTM standards would not be affordable for the DIY biofuel producer. There is a kit available called the pHlip test, which provides a visual analysis that is more affordable for the DIYer. However, it won't replace the ASTM testing.

**Are there other regulations if I want to make my own fuel?** The Missouri Department of Revenue taxes fuel used for over the road vehicles. If you use the homemade biodiesel in any vehicle traveling up and down the road, you have to pay fuel tax on that quantity. The Missouri Department of Natural Resources may require permits for air and water quality pollution prevention. Furthermore, depending on the quantity of fuel processed and stored, you may be required to provide secondary containment.

**Will engine manufacturers warranty engines using fuel produced on the farm?** It is believed that manufacturers fully support B5. B20 is a little iffy. If the fuel causes a problem with the engine, the responsibility falls on the fuel supplier. B100 will have to pass ASTM testing in order for the manufacturer to stand behind the warranty.

**What insurance issues will be involved in on-farm production such as fire, liability, accident?** Check with insurance agents. Risk of these issues may increase with the production, handling and storage of biofuels.

**Are there any cold weather flowability problems?** There is very little problem with B5. B20 however begins to freeze anywhere from 2° to 10° sooner than number 2 diesel. However, the same measures you use with number 2 diesel to prevent flow problems can be used with the biodiesel blends.

**Who will be willing to buy co-products: primarily the glycerin?** There are many uses for glycerin, but how many buyers are going to be interested in small quantities? New developments are coming down the pipe. A University of Missouri researcher has developed a process to convert glycerin to propylene glycol, a bio-based, non-toxic and renewable antifreeze.

**How many acres of crop per 1000 gallons of oil will it take to produce fuel?** With a moderate yield of soybeans, sunflowers or canola, 1000 gallons of oil would take about 20 acres of soybeans and 12 to 13 acres of sunflowers or canola.



Producing your own biofuel is possible. You just have a few hoops to jump through. You might want to buy a gallon of vegetable oil, a new blender for your spouse, a little "Heet", some lye and use the old

blender to process the oil into biofuel and glycerin— just to see if that's something you really want to do. Be sure to follow a tried and true recipe for the experiment. Oh yea, put down plastic or something to make cleanup a little easier too.

# ***Upcoming Programs of Interest***

## **Private Pesticide Applicator Training**

**Tuesday, March 11, 2008**

**1 p.m.**

**Carthage, Jasper County Courthouse**

**Tuesday, March 11, 2008**

**6 p.m.**

**Nevada, Bowman Bldg. Cafeteria**

Call Vernon County Extension, 417-448-2560 by March 4<sup>th</sup>.

## **“Eat Well, Be Well with Diabetes”**

**March 18, March 25 and April 1, 2008**

**5:30 p.m. each evening**

**Barton County Memorial Hospital Education Room**

**\$10 per person**

Register early! Class size is limited to 25.

Call Tammy Roberts, 417-682-3579, for more information and to register.

## **Welcoming Reception for Kathy Macomber**

**Thursday, March 27**

**11 a.m. to 1 p.m.**

Kathy is the new University of Missouri Business Development Specialist.

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