

Blair County Newsletter

Quarterly Newsletter of Blair County Farm Bureau



Volume 6, Issue 1

February 2021

Fellow Farm Bureau Members,

Farming can be stressful, even on the best days. Last March when COVID-19 hit, farmers and ranchers got a big load of stress on top of all the issues in farming we are already used to dealing with. Few of us thought back then that we'd still be in the midst of a global pandemic 10 months later. There's an old joke about the light at the end of the tunnel being the train coming at you. It sure can feel that way some days, but I remain hopeful that we will continue to get through these challenges together.

At Farm Bureau, we want farmers and ranchers to know they are not alone when stress takes its toll. When we started focusing our attention on rural stress and mental health more than two years ago, we knew these were important matters on the farm, but we had no idea what was coming. Even without the lost markets and income as a result of the pandemic adding to farmers' stress, we had already been facing trade disruptions, extreme weather events, labor shortages--and the list goes on. It can be hard to admit when everything is not OK, but it makes a world of difference to reach out and share that burden with your friends and family.

In February 2020, Farm Bureau expanded the reach and impact of our work in addressing stress and mental health issues in farming and rural communities with the [Farm State of Mind](#) campaign from Bayer. This campaign has given us a broader platform to highlight the importance of good mental health on a national scale. It's so important for farmers, ranchers and everyone in rural communities to understand the sources of stress and be willing to talk about it. Through our Farm State of Mind outreach, we're helping people recognize the warning signs of stress, encouraging [conversations](#), and providing resources to help farm and ranch families and rural communities.

As farmers and ranchers, we can be proud of our resilience. We get up every day, do the work that needs to be done, and just keep going no matter what. But sometimes the qualities that make us such good farmers make it very hard for us to ask for help when we are under too much stress. We've all seen this firsthand, but it doesn't have to be this way. It's OK not to be OK, and you don't have to go it alone.

If you or someone you know is struggling emotionally or has concerns about their mental health, please visit the Farm State of Mind website at farmstateofmind.org where you can find crisis hotlines, treatment locators, tips for helping someone in emotional pain, ways to start a conversation and resources for managing stress, anxiety or depression.

We all know farmers help farmers, and this past year has been no exception. In 2021, let's all resolve to look out even more for our friends, family and neighbors, watch for warning signs of stress we may see in them, and offer a helping hand. No matter what comes our way, there's hope and help in our Farm Bureau family and in our rural communities because we are truly stronger together.

Sincerely yours,

Gary Long

President, Blair County Farm Bureau

Member Benefits, Pesticide Applicators and Safety Webinars

Hosted by:

Blair County Farm Bureau and Nationwide®

The **FREE** 2 hour live webinars are being conducted by Nationwide's Risk Management Services Unit, offers ways to keep your business and employees safe. Those in attendance will receive 2 Core and 2 Category Points toward your Pa Pesticide Applicators License. Topics will include:

- *Pesticide Labels and Safety-Sensitive Applications*
- *Application equipment use, maintenance and calibration*
- *Safe application techniques, including drift reduction*
- *Weeds and Weed Management*
- *Insects, Diseases and Management*

The live webinars will take place:

- Tuesday, March 2
 - 9:45 am – 12:00 pm
 - 1:00 pm – 3:15 pm
- Wednesday, March 3
 - 9:45 am – 12:00 pm
 - 1:00 pm – 3:15 pm
- Thursday, March 4
 - 9:45 am – 12:00 pm
 - 7:00 pm – 9:15 pm

To register for any of these webinars go to:
<https://form.jotform.com/210174157157048>



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-Joseph Diamond 814-934-0330

If you are interested in getting involved with any of our county or state Farm Bureau programs or if you have a project, program or issue that farm bureau should be involved in please give any of the board members a call. We look forward to hearing from you. Thanks for being a farm bureau member.

Blair County Farm Bureau Newsletter is published by Blair County Farm Bureau four times per year.

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Blair County Farm Bureau

5161 Clover Creek Road

Williamsburg, PA 16693

Advertisement Opportunity

Interest in reach over 775 Blair County Farm Bureau Members. The Blair County Farm Bureau Board is making this opportunity available to members.

The Blair County Farm Bureau Board of Directors updated it rates on August 28, 2018, Meeting the following Advertising rates:

- Business Card - \$50/per issue
- ¼ Page - \$100/per issue
- ½ Page - \$175/per issue
- Full Page - \$325/per issue

The goal of the Blair County Farm Bureau is to produce and print 4 newsletters in fiscal year. If you buy an advertisement in 3 consecutive newsletters you will get an advertisement in the next newsletter for free.

Newsletter are normally printed in September, November, February, and June.

To have an advertisement placed in the newsletter the advertiser must be a member of the Blair County Farm Bureau.

The Blair County Farm Bureau Board of Directors has the right to accept or reject advertisements or advertisers.

If interested in advertising please contact

Joseph Diamond at 814-934-0330 or
jmdiamond@pfb.com

Help Wanted!



The Governor's Advisory Council for Hunting, Fishing and Conservation is seeking a qualified candidate from Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Fulton, Huntingdon and Somerset counties to represent District 4 on the Pennsylvania Game Commission's board of directors. Applicants must be well-informed about wildlife conservation and restoration and be residents of the district. Commissioners receive no compensation for their service but are reimbursed for travel expenses. Individuals interested in applying should email a resume and cover letter to Robb Miller, Governor's Advisor for Hunting, Fishing and Conservation, robmille@pa.gov. Applications will be accepted until Friday, March 26, 2021.

Blair County Conservation District

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Are your Farm Plans up to date?
Schedule a call now before Spring hits!

Call Rich or Stephen today to review
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Apply Now for Expanded COVID-19 Relief Programs

Farmers can apply now for two of the expanded relief programs included in the recently adopted federal COVID-19 relief package.

The application window is open through March 31 for the second round of the U.S. Small Business Administration's Paycheck Protection Program.

The program is open to businesses with fewer than 300 employees that show a 25 percent loss between comparable quarters in 2019 and 2020. Farmers and business owners can apply for the loans through a participating lender.

Learn more at www.sba.gov/ppp.

In addition, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has reopened Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) to producers who were not previously eligible but now qualify due to the relief bill. Newly eligible producers include:

- Contract producers of swine, broilers, laying hens, chicken eggs and turkeys who suffered a drop in revenue due to COVID.
- Producers of pullets and turfgrass sod.

In addition, USDA will allow certain producers to modify existing CFAP applications to reflect updated payment calculations. Visit <http://bit.ly/3iftMP7> for details on updated payment calculations for:

- Certain producers of specialty crops, aquaculture, tobacco, specialty livestock, nursery crops and floriculture.
- Certain producers with crop insurance coverage who grew barley, corn, sorghum, soybeans, sunflowers, and wheat.

In addition to those changes, hog producers who participated in the first round of CFAP will automatically receive a \$17 per head additional payment.

Newly eligible producers who need to submit a CFAP application or producers who need to modify an existing one can do so through Feb. 26 by contacting their local USDA Service Center. New applicants can also obtain one-on-one support with applications by calling 877.508.8364.

Learn more at www.farmers.gov/cfap.



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Applications Now Open for Beginning Farmer Tax Credit

The first opportunity to apply for Pennsylvania's new Beginning Farmer Tax Credit opened on **Feb. 1**.

And it's important to act soon. Credits will be given on a first-come, first-served basis based on when applications are received.

Last summer, the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development launched the program, which was created by a 2019 law, which Pennsylvania Farm Bureau worked closely with state Sen. Elder Vogel, Jr. to develop and advocate for.

The application window opening Feb. 1 will be for the 2020 tax year.

The income tax credit provides an incentive to lease or sell land, buildings and/or equipment to beginning farmers.

The program allows for a one-time tax credit for property sold to a beginning farmer or a multi-year credit for property leased. The tax credit could be used to aid in family transitions—such as sales from a parent or grandparent to a child or grandchild—or to help an unrelated beginning farmer.

Beginning farmers who participate in the program must be certified by DCED by demonstrating that they have the experience or transferable skills needed to work in agriculture, have not received income from farming for longer than 10 years, and plan to farm in Pennsylvania, providing the majority of the labor and management for their operation.

Property owners can claim a credit equal to 5 percent of the sale price or fair market value (whichever is lower) of an asset sold to a beginning farmer, up to a maximum of \$32,000. For rental agreements, the credit is equal to 10 percent of gross rental income for the first, second and third years of the rental agreement, up to a maximum of \$7,000 per year. The program is capped at \$5 million for the 2020 tax year.

Pennsylvania Farm Bureau has information about the program, including state guidance documents and forms, available on its website. Visit **www.pfb.com/BeginningFarmerTaxCredit** to learn more.

Agritourism Civil Liability

We have restarted our efforts at bringing civil liability relief to farmers that host events and activities on their farm.

House Bill 101 was recently approved unanimously by the House Agriculture & Rural Affairs Committee and may be considered by the full House in February. If adopted, HB 101 would protect farmers for accidents that happen for circumstances beyond their control. However, farmers could still be liable for circumstances of significant negligence. In addition, farmers would be required to post multiple warning signs and either obtain a waiver, or put a waiver on the back of an admission ticket. This legislation is identical to a version that passed the House last session.

Milk Truck Hauling

The House Agriculture & Rural Affairs Committee also approved House Bill 186 that would provide a clear exemption to milk trucks from commercial weather bans that have been enacted in recent years. If enacted, milk truck haulers would be able to continue to use major interstates during travel bans to ensure that milk is picked up from farms and delivered to processing plants in a timely fashion. Over the past three years, PennDOT and other state agencies have enacted bans on commercial trucks from being on interstates during weather emergencies.

Other initiatives

Pennsylvania Farm Bureau is working with lawmakers on several other pieces of legislation:

Creating a statewide system to drive conservation dollars to county conservation districts for on-farm conservation practices that improve local water quality.

Providing clear exemptions for farmers that want to use their barns and buildings for social events, such as weddings, from requirements to install a sprinkler system.

Tax measures including exempting farmers from having to pay unemployment taxes on H2A workers; allowing landowners to use a simplified method for claiming deductions for oil and natural gas leases; providing clear exemptions from sales tax requirements for farmers purchasing multi-purpose agriculture vehicles (MAVs).



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Blair County Emergency Management is trying to be proactive and gather a list of those Farmers interested in getting the COVID-19 vaccine. Under the most current guidelines, farm workers qualify under the 1B guideline, if they are not 65 or older, in which they are now in the 1A group.

Please continue to monitor the State DOH site and our website

(<http://www.blairco.org/Dept/EmergencyMgmt/Pages/default.aspx>) for information.

If anyone wants to contact our office with their contact information, we will put you on the list, but at this time we do not have specifics on when or where the vaccine will be available. We do know some local pharmacies are starting to get them, but demand will almost certainly outstrip supply.

If any farmers want to contact us directly, they can e-mail me at JFarber@Blairco.org or call our office at 814-940-5901.

Sincerely,

Jeff Farber

Jeff Farber

Emergency Management & Haz-Mat Planner

Blair County Department of Emergency Services

Last June, Direct Action Everywhere, an anti-animal agriculture activist group, launched "Project Counterglow" an interactive map with locations of farms across the U.S. While the page/group hasn't been as active recently, they are ramping up with their "Febru-Dairy" campaign. They are asking their followers to submit specific information about farms including the address, photos and video, news clips, and social media links. We expect they will use this information for further activism activity.

Please do not share this post /information in public groups (if you share in private groups, do so via screen shot, so as not to drive more traffic to the site), or mention the campaign in your social media efforts, as this will help draw attention to their campaign.

What can you do? Our advice remains – the best people to tell the true story of animal agriculture are farmers themselves, in their own voices. Continue to tell the work you do with your animals, employees, and the environment. This good work helps make deposits in your credibility bank and builds supporters, both in and out of your community.

As always, incidents like these are a good reminder to review farm security measures. Below are some tips from the Animal Agriculture Alliance to help keep your farm secure. Your co-op or milk handler and/or state Farm Bureau office may also have other resources.

Keep Your Farm Secure

The most important step to take is ensuring that you have no vulnerabilities in terms of animal care or environmental impact that could be exploited.

It's about "YouTube-proofing" your operation and making sure there is nothing going on that you wouldn't want to be broadcasted to the world. Activists have shown they are more than willing to exaggerate, fabricate or take things out of context, so we can't give them any ammunition.

Make Yourself a Harder Target

- Take basic steps to secure your farm and facility, making it more difficult to access by intruders. These include: No Trespassing signage, motion-sensor lighting, security cameras, gates, fencing, etc.
- Consider what is visible from the road. Some groups are encouraging activists to constantly monitor farms and plants from public property to see if they can obtain photos or videos that can be used. Consider the "curb appeal" of your operation and make any possible changes to prevent sensitive procedures from being viewed from public land or roadways.
- Implement a policy for handling visitors as well as requests for information. Activists will use any excuse to try to access a farm or facility, including misrepresenting their identity. Do not allow any unauthorized visitors to come onto your property for any reason and do not take claims at face value. Ask for credentials or identification and verify any claims (for example, call the company they claim to represent). Make sure all family members and employees know what your visitor process is and follow it every single time.
- Be cautious with hiring. Activists are constantly trying to get hired on farms and in plants. Never cut corners in your hiring process regardless of how urgently you need workers. Have a formal process including a written application and carefully check references by calling past employers' main number –not the one listed on their application.

If you have questions, please contact Beth Meyer, director of consumer confidence for American Dairy Association North East, at bmeyer@milk4u.org or 315.491.3892.

Nationwide is on Your Side

Nationwide Insurance began in 1925 as the Farm Bureau Mutual Automobile Insurance Company with the goal of providing quality auto insurance at low rates for Farm Bureau members in Ohio. Nine state Farm Bureaus promote Nationwide and provide discounts to members. Other than Ohio, Pennsylvania Farm Bureau has had the longest relationship with Nationwide than the other eight state Farm Bureaus.

The **Nationwide appointed agencies** in Blair County are:

Chad Boyer

735 S Logan Blvd
Hollidaysburg, PA 16648-3031
814.946.9486 chad@theboyeragency.com

Todd Good & Associates

343 Bedford St
Claysburg, PA 16625-8231
814.239.2205 monet@goodinsuranceagencies.com

Jonathan T May

Kyle Miller & Associates
41 South Market St, Ste 201
Elizabethtown, PA 17022
(703)855-0397 jmay@kmainsurancegroup.com

Darin Meck

908 Spruce St
Roaring Spring, PA 16673-1535
814.224.2166

Gary Shetter

305 Union Ave
Altoona, PA 16602
814.944.4651 shetterinsuranceagency@gmail.com

John Carr

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Plenty of Funding Available for Farm Conservation Planning

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection has lots of funding still available to reimburse farmers in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed for costs associated with developing conservation plans.

As of mid-December, the Agricultural Plan Reimbursement Program still had more than \$700,000 available to reimburse producers for the cost of hiring technical experts to develop Nutrient and Manure Management and Agricultural Erosion and Sediment Control plans. Plans developed after Jan. 1, 2019 are eligible.

More than one plan may be submitted for reimbursement, for up to a maximum of \$6,000. Plans must be submitted by May 31, 2021 to be eligible for reimbursement.

More information about the program is available at

<http://bit.ly/2Nranxh>.

For additional questions, farmers in Adams, Bedford, Berks, Blair, Cambria, Chester, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Fulton, Huntingdon, Indiana, Juniata, Lancaster, Lebanon, Mifflin, Perry, Somerset, and York Counties should contact Jedd Moncavage of TeamAg at jeddm@teamaginc.com or 717.721.6795.

Check out the New PFB.com!

Pennsylvania Farm Bureau has a brand-new website that's been updated to better serve our members. Check it out by visiting **www.pfb.com**.

The new and improved website has been redesigned for optimal viewing on both computers and mobile devices. Improvements have also been made to help you more easily find information about Farm Bureau and Pennsylvania agriculture.

The site has a revamped Members Only section, with member benefits discount codes; electronic archives of PFB publications; important policy development, advocacy and leadership documents; and more. Rather than having to create an account and wait for it to be approved, members can now access the Members Only section instantly using their membership number, ZIP code and last name.

Among the new features is an online newsroom, where PFB will report news about our advocacy efforts, organizational news and important information for Pennsylvania farmers. You'll still be able to see these updates in *Country Focus* and our biweekly email newsletter, *Farm Bureau Express*. But the [pfb.com](http://www.pfb.com) newsroom will provide an option to get timely news updates without waiting for the next issue of our print or electronic publications.

Also new are an online calendar of Farm Bureau and Pennsylvania agriculture events and overhauled pages for each county Farm Bureau to post news and updates.

Visit the new site at www.pfb.com.



Blair County Farm Bureau
5161 Clover Creek Road
Williamsburg, PA 16693

Address Service Requested

- Upcoming Events:
- ❖ February 23
 - ❖ February 23
 - ❖ March 2-4
 - ❖ March 14
 - ❖ March 15-19
 - ❖ March 17
 - ❖ April 18-24
 - ❖ June 18

County By-Laws Review Committee Meeting
County Farm Bureau Board Meeting
Virtual Pesticide Updates
Day Light Saving Time Begins
Ag Literacy Week
Region 4 Farm Bureau Day
Rural Road Safety Week
Blair County Farm Bureau Picnic