

Lancaster Farming



An edition of the Intelligencer Journal/ Lancaster New Era and Lancaster Newspapers, Inc.

Vol. 59 No. 33

www.lancasterfarming.com

Five Sections

Saturday, May 24, 2014

\$49.00 Per Year

\$1.00 Per Copy

Balancing Cattle With Fencing Firm, Children

LISA Z. LEIGHTON

Central Pa. Correspondent

ALLENWOOD, Pa. — Tommy Hamm has a lot on his plate. The young farmer recently celebrated two milestones — turning 30 and witnessing the birth of his second daughter.

He and his wife, Megan, spend much of their time caring for their two young children, a 3-year-old and their recent addition, a 3-week old. But they also manage two full-time businesses, a 100-plus acre, 40-cow-and-calf operation and a business that specializes in animal fencing.

Tommy Hamm is used to the balancing act that farming requires. He grew up on the farm that he now owns and is proud to say that soon Elim Springs will be a century farm, having been passed down in his family for several generations.

Hamm purchased his first commercial beef cattle when he was just 12 years old. And now, with a business administration degree from Pennsylvania College of Technology behind him, he manages a herd of mostly registered Angus and Simmental cattle.

When asked about his future goals for the farm he quips, “To make it sustainable.”

But it appears as though he’s already achieving that goal, as he has just enough beef cattle to meet the local demand.

“I don’t need to actively market (my beef cattle). ... Word of mouth helps me provide just enough for the local area,” he said.

More **BALANCING**, page A3



Photo by Philip Gruber

Scott Sechler, president of Bell & Evans, pauses as chickens fly past for processing at the Bell & Evans plant.

Bell & Evans Building Two New Processing Plants

PHILIP GRUBER

Staff Writer

FREDERICKSBURG, Pa. — A high-end Lebanon County chicken producer is in the midst of a major expansion project that will triple the size of its processing and packing space.

Bell & Evans will open a new 160,000 square-foot plant early next year that will increase the company’s processing capacity by 20 percent.

For a company that usually grows by 10 to 14 percent a year, though,

“that doesn’t last long,” said Scott Sechler, the company’s president.

To address that longer-term need for space, Bell & Evans is settling on a second property next month that will eventually add 2.5 million birds per week to its capacity.

The company currently slaughters just under 1 million birds a week, Sechler said.

Construction of that larger building should start in 2017.

Both sites are within a few miles of the original Fredericksburg factory.

The first new plant will cost \$40 million plus equipment. It is too early to say what the second building will cost, Sechler said.

Bell & Evans is known for its lines of antibiotic-free, organic and gluten-free chicken products sold at upscale grocery stores and restaurants. All of the chickens and their feed come from the United States.

Thanks partly to the rapid expansion of major customers like More **BELL & EVANS**, page A6

Marketing Nonprofit Connects Beef Buyers, Sellers

PHILIP GRUBER

Staff Writer

A group of Pennsylvania cattlemen helping their fellow farmers get more money for their feeders is doing brisk business.

Now 4 years old, the nonprofit Keystone Beef Marketing Network uses personal connections and an online marketplace to bypass the sale barns.

“We’ve really been able to diversify and help,” said Glenn Eberly, an Angus farmer from Milroy who used to run Pennsylvania’s livestock evaluation center.

Keystone has already moved several thousand feeders this year, he said.

Among its services, Keystone combines groups of cattle from smaller producers into larger loads, which command higher prices and are cheaper to transport, Eberly said.

“We still do a large portion of our business with smaller operations,” Eberly said, though “larger producers are very willing to adapt if it fits their program, if we have the product that they’re looking for.”

The group has been leasing the McKean buying station in Mercer, Pa., for a year and a half. The location has helped improve the group’s operations in western Pennsylvania, said Blaine Winger, the network’s only full-time employee.

Before leasing the buying station, Winger had only a pickup, business card and handshake to represent the organization. The physical location is more convenient for the producers, he said.

The animals are weighed as soon as they get off the truck at the barn. Unlike a sale barn, where animals might stand around for hours before being weighed, there is no shrinkage to worry about, Winger said.

“Our guys are really happy about that,” he said.

Winger is at the station on Monday and Tuesday mornings, and he spends the rest of the week on the road, visiting farms and evaluating cattle.

Winger visits farms from Clearfield to Somerset counties in Pennsylvania, Columbiana to Ashtabula counties in Ohio, and occasionally even West Virginia. Eberly covers eastern Pennsylvania.

On the farm, Winger evaluates the cattle, and takes pictures and videos for posting on the United Producers website — all for free. He charges a flat fee when the animals are sold.

Keystone works closely with Ohio-based United Producers, More **MARKETING**, page A7

Last Hurrah for Highland Cattle Show in Mercer, Pa.

CAROL ANN GREGG

Western Pa. Correspondent

MERCER, Pa. — Even though last Saturday’s show would be the last for the Mid-Atlantic Highland Cattle Association in Mercer, exhibitors enjoyed the camaraderie with each other as they settled in to the show-prep routine.

Many of the exhibitors who began arriving the day before to get ready for the event have been coming to this show for years and were looking forward to a couple of days with cattle talk and visiting long-time friends.

According to Ginnah Moses, op-

erations manager of the American Highland Cattle Association, which has offices in Brighton, Colo., a committee recommended to the national board that shows with only Highland cattle be discontinued.

“They have been encouraged to participate in more public venues and that shows be with at least one other breed,” Moses said. The organization has learned through the years that shows with only Highland cattle attract only fellow breeders and don’t draw the public.

The national Highland Cattle Show, for instance, is held in con-

More **HIGHLAND CATTLE**, page A2



Photo by Carol Ann Gregg

Rick Milliman of Michigan helps his friend Eddie Mackay get his Highland cattle ready to show.



Pa. Granger A22



Tractor Gallery A41



Berry Sweet B2



2014 Fair Guide Section E