



# West Virginia AG ED NEWS and VIEWS

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Harry N. Boone, Jr., Ph.D., Editor

## *Out of the Frying Pan....*

*by Keith Burdette*

These are exciting times for agricultural education! Probably more so than ever, we have the opportunity to demonstrate what our programs can do for students. This is the mind-set I bring into my new position as Lead Coordinator for Agriculture, Science and Natural Resources in the West Virginia Department of Education. The twenty-five years of experience as an agricultural education professional (the last seven on state staff) have helped me realize the impact we really can have in the lives of our students and communities. As I've traveled the state, I've met countless individuals who've testified how agricultural education and FFA made the difference in the lives of young people and their families.

Time moves on, though, and we cannot rest on our laurels. Yesterday's wins don't guarantee tomorrow's victories. While we can build on a tradition of program success, we must provide our best efforts every day to help ensure continued accomplishments.

In a previous issue of *News and Views*, I provided some tips for successful teachers. I hope you'll see consistency in my educational philosophy as I provide my view of and vision for agricultural education. Just as each paragraph of the FFA Creed begins with the words, "I believe," here are some of my personal "I believes" which are offered for your consideration.

**We must never forget our mission.** Agricultural education prepares students for successful careers and a lifetime of informed choices in the global agriculture, food, fiber and natural resources systems. That's our mission statement. A careful examination of it should challenge and energize us. It should make each one of us ask ourselves questions: Do I really know what careers are out there? Do I incorporate decision-making and problem solving into my instruction? Do I intro-

duce the global aspect of agriculture to my students? Do my students really appreciate the importance of a stable food supply to the economic success of a nation? These are all thoughts that might affect how we deliver our content.

**We must remain in touch with the agriculture industry.** Advancements in technology, genetics, and pharmaceuticals coupled with economic and political changes in our world create a dynamic environment in which to teach agriculture. We must do our best to access current information which affects what and how we teach. We all know the agricultural industry and world situation have changed in the past few years – do our curricular materials and instructional techniques reflect those changes?

**We must be prepared to provide specific examples of agricultural careers.** I don't think it's enough to just tell students there are careers out there for them. We need to be able to provide them with real examples: where the jobs are, what they encompass, what level of education is required, and what pay and benefits are typically associated with them. In our changing world, we realize we are often asked to prepare students for careers that haven't yet been created. However, there are existing careers related to students' interests, and I believe we should be prepared to link them to specific career information. (Note: The Internet can come in handy here.) I don't want us to be accused of simply telling students there are careers out there, it's up to them to find it, and wish them luck. Let's provide them with some career guidance – I think it's part of our job.

**We must continue to teach entrepreneurship.** While we should be able to provide specific career examples, most of those careers probably involve students working for another individual, business or agency. In my



*Keith Burdette was recently hired as Lead Coordinator for Agriculture, Science and Natural Resources in the West Virginia Department of Education. He has over twenty-five years of experience in agricultural education as a high school teacher and WV State Coordinator for Agricultural Education/FFA Executive Secretary. Keith earned B.S (1982) and M.S. (1990) degrees in Agricultural Education from West Virginia University.*

opinion, we fail our students if we do not plant the seed in their minds of the possibility of working for themselves. Perhaps one of them can be that business owner who hires others. As students develop their supervised agricultural experience programs, help them see what it would take to expand an enterprise into one which could sustain themselves and their families. While I realize only a minority of students might ever reach that plateau, all students can benefit from some entrepreneurship training. Students should be encouraged to "dream big" – and then see how to make their dreams become reality.

**We must seek, utilize, and/or develop credentialing mechanisms related to the agricultural industry.** As we introduce students to careers, we need to become aware of

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## *Out of the Frying Pan.... (continued)*

any available credentials associated with those careers. If there are none associated with a particular specialty, maybe we should develop some certifications of our own, verifying skills achieved and experiences acquired. While some schools already offer this type of documentation, perhaps it's time to meet with industry representatives and further develop credentialing opportunities.

**We must always be prepared to demonstrate how our instruction reinforces 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning.** Agricultural education has always provided opportunities for problem-solving, analysis, synthesis, and other higher-order thinking skills. We've also been using computers, probes, GPS devices, and other advanced technologies for years. We must continue to show our use of these strategies and technologies in our curriculum. In some situations, that means modifying what and how we teach. It also means being familiar with the terminology so we can articulate to others how we are incorporating higher-order thinking skills and technology in the context of our courses.

**We must expand opportunities to acquire college credit for advanced secondary agriculture courses.** A number of schools are offering EDGE (Earn a Degree, Graduate Early) credit for their courses, but this is not universal. Great opportunities ex-

ist for developing articulation agreements with post-secondary institutions or awarding credit at four-year universities. Perhaps it's time to see if there's the need for associated degree programs in more of our post-secondary institutions.

**We must maintain the correct relationship between curriculum and FFA.** As mentioned in the previous *News and Views* article, I believe the FFA organization provides countless opportunities for student recognition. It can be a fabulous public relations tool. It is a mistake, however, to sacrifice sound education in order to have a successful FFA chapter. FFA should be an outgrowth of the program, not a substitute for it. We must try to hit that perfect blend of FFA activities that complement the agricultural education program. Remember in the long run that as agricultural education goes, so goes FFA.

**We must remain aware of educational trends and movements.** It is critical to remain current on policy issues like graduation requirements, alternate scheduling possibilities, etc. Are there policies being discussed in your school or county which would benefit from your input at the developmental stage? I think you'll agree, it is easier to be proactive than to react to a negative stimulus. Be open to possibilities that can benefit your program and alert to those which can damage it.

**We must never lose our enthusiasm for what we do.** It's been said, "Nothing great was ever accomplished without enthusiasm." I believe it, and I also believe we have something worth celebrating. A properly-delivered agricultural education program offers the best of everything – knowledge and skills in mathematics, biology, physics, communication, and other fields of knowledge applied to real-world situations which lead to the production and marketing of food and fiber. Toss in experiential learning and leadership development for good measure, and you have an educational model. If an agriculture teacher can't find satisfaction and reward in preparing young people to lead productive lives in this realm, he/she ought to spend a little time with an effective, creative, dynamic teacher and rekindle the fire that once burned within.

I hope you noticed as you read I began each statement with the word "we." That's intentional – I believe it's not just your responsibility to do these things. It's mine as well. While the move from a coordinator into the lead position might be compared to "going from the frying pan into the fire," I welcome the opportunity. We have so much to offer. My goal is to provide you, our students, and our stakeholders with my best efforts. I welcome your input throughout the journey. I hope you will not be disappointed.

## *AGEE Field Experience Reflections*

**Justin Knopp**

*Jackson County Extension Office*

My field experience for the past two summers was completed with the West Virginia University Extension Service at the Jackson County office in Ripley. My supervisor was extension agent Ed Smolder. During my internship I learned a lot, not only about agriculture, but working with the people of the community. The job varied from helping treat livestock, to answering questions about pastures, trees, and gardens. I would have to say that the majority of the phone calls that I answered either dealt with gardens, trees, and insects. The rest of the calls varied from 4-H camp questions to questions about the county fair. I really enjoyed trying to help people with their questions but I sometimes had to transfer the call to Ed.

The experience was great the past two summers. It really gave me an insight on what the Extension service does and what it would be like to be an Extension agent. It can be a stressful position but the majority of the time it is a great thing. I really did not decide to major in extension until I came to WVU and worked my first summer at the Extension office in Ripley. I met

a lot of people and made several friends while working along side Ed, and while I was in the office the staff there was so gracious, they helped us when we needed help with certain jobs and it was that way the first time I stepped foot in the office, it was just a great working environment. My responsibilities varied from answering phones, copying, faxing, sending newsletters out and going out in the field with Ed. I really enjoyed being out in the field.

The most stressful times in the office were around 4-H camp. I was able to help put camp information and activities together. I never thought that it would be as hard as it was. I helped with classes and watched over the kids during camp. Even though I was in 4-H when I was younger this was the first camp that I attended. It was a great experience and it tested your nerves to help with a camp of this size. The camp is a huge activity in our county that teaches kids responsibilities while they have fun. They also get to learn about agriculture as they raise a fair project, the fair is always a big week for the kids and they wait year round for it to begin again. Along with camp I usually was in the office most of the week working on putting

together things for the fair, wool pool and so on, but there was one little research project that I was helping with and it was Femancha This is where we would check the lower eye lids of the sheep to see if we needed to deworm them or not, the color of the eye lids should be a pinkish to a red color, if it is pale white then you need to deworm the sheep, this allows the sheep producer to save money and time and not over medicate anything. I researched this the two summers I was there and I can say that it works; I kept records on the sheep by tag numbers. We would also help young kids shear their sheep, trim their feet and then we would shear some sheep at the Environmental day at our fairgrounds. Ed and I also went to Wirt county schools to shear some sheep at their annual culture festival, we sheared the sheep and the kids were entertained at this and they learned a lot. These past summers was the first time that I ever sheared sheep, but I have learned a lot about these animals and what precautions to take while taking care of them. We held the wool pool at our fairgrounds in which sheep producers would bring their wool down and we would weigh it and bale it up into bales that will weigh around 400-500 lbs, it is always a long day and when

## **AGEE Field Experience Reflections** (Continued)

you get done you will smell like a sheep for days. There are little producers anymore that will take the time to do this because of the price of wool, it has dropped in the past years and no one wants to handle it or worry about it. Mr. Smolder wanted to get us involved in everything that he had done and let us experience everything there was to do with the extension service and I would have to say that he was successful at it. The most important things that we dealt with in the summer was our 4-H camp and the Jackson County Junior Fair. This fair brings in people from around the state and lets the kids have fun with all the activities that are offered during this week. It takes a lot of time to put everything together and without the volunteers the fair would not be what it is today. I was usually with Ed everyday making sure that everything ran smoothly, we weighed in animals along with making sure they are sheared or trimmed for the shows. I usually looked over things in the livestock barns to make sure the animals got proper care and I also helped on the stage during shows and our livestock sale which is on Friday of that week, and it starts at 11a.m. and goes well into the night usually around 11p.m. My responsibilities were to write down the sale price in the sale books as the auctioneer sales each animal. The fair is a great thing. It allows kids to show the public how well they have raised their fair animals and provides rewards for taking care of their animals. When the youth sell their animals they get a premium price and this allows them to put money into their college funds or school supplies. It makes a young person feel good when they find out how much money they received. I was the same way when I was their age. After the fair I usually stayed until the second week of August. When I completed the 4-H record books and activity books that I graded I was finished for the summer. I was fortunate to be able to work for the extension service it was a great experience for me and I will never forget the fun times I had along with some difficult times also.

### **April Mallow**

#### **Marion County Technical Center**

My student teaching experience is a time in my life that will influence and stay with me for the rest of my days. After this experience, I very much understand why teaching is such a difficult and trying profession. The day in and day out hassles of the job, make it very unbearable at times. If teachers were able to just teach, it wouldn't be that bad, but they must deal with the demands of the administration, discipline problems, illness, and various other issues that come up during the day. It takes a very strong will to be able to keep one's head during these situations. I realize that you will have problems in any career you choose to pursue, but I believe that the difficulties in teaching are different from all of them.

I was assigned to teach at Marion County Technical Center. The school is attached to North Marion High School, although Marion County Technical Center is considered a high school within the county. The community in this area is very rural and very Caucasian. There is little to no diversity of ethnic background among the students with which I worked. Many of the students come from families that do not stress education beyond high school as being greatly important. Many have the mindset that after high school, one must go straight to work and education is unnecessary for the type of life they see themselves leading. A phrase I heard quite often was "college is not for everyone." I agree that college is not for everyone, but I firmly believe that post-secondary education of some kind is necessary in life. When the aforementioned phrase is said to a class of high schools students, it sends the message to all of them that they may not have the potential to go to college. This can often result in a very bright student believing that they are not intelligent enough to make it in the college setting. All students should be encouraged to shoot for the moon and individually spoken to about their limits.

From my previous experiences in agriculture education, I was used to a different caliber of students than what I met with at Marion County Technical Center. In my experience, agriculture students were achievers and very enthusiastic about learning and succeeding in their education. Many of my students took the classes because there was nothing else in the schedule for them to take at that time and they were unhappy to be there. I realize that it was my job to motivate them into wanting to be there, but some students did not respond even with my best efforts. Many students took the class because they felt it was an "easy A," and they thought they would be able to get by with doing nothing. They were less than thrilled when I arrived to make them perform instead of just sitting or sleeping through class.

I became very discouraged and depressed during my teaching experience. I felt that I wasn't getting through to the students and I wasn't making a difference. I did have good days when my university supervisor would come to visit. I would get feed back and support. It made a difference to get constructive criticism and positive feedback. That way, I knew what I was doing correctly and what I needed to fix. I could then understand and have motivation to change and improve my strategies and lessons.

My favorite thing about student teaching was Supervised Agricultural Experience Program visits. I really enjoyed going to the homes of my students and visiting with their families. On occasions I would be invited to dinner with the families which really touched me. At Marion

County Tech, the majority of the students are not involved with the FFA and don't have supervised agricultural experience programs. This is an area that really needs improvement. Their programs consist mainly of ham/bacon show hogs and then there is little expansion upon that. I helped the students in preparing for the show and also visited them at home later. I visited several students a number of times. The students have the potential to succeed in the agriculture field, but I feel that they need more encouragement.

Looking back, I will have to say that overall my experience was a positive one. It was positive in the fact that I learned things about myself. I don't feel that I can produce enough "magic" within myself at this time to be a full-time teacher. At the moment, I don't feel that teaching is where I want to go in my life. To be a teacher you have to be able to bring magic to the classroom everyday. I just don't have it in me at this time to reach a level of performance that is required for the profession. This time in my life also made me remember what high school can be like and also the bureaucracy that can be involved in public education. At this time, I really do not feel that it is the right place for me.

### **Molly McCartney**

#### **Taylor Environmental Advocacy Membership**

All in all this experience has been eye opening, controversial, complicated, and frustrating at times. However, it has also been extremely interesting and even fun on occasion. But more than anything, it has been a very good learning experience, not just professionally, but personally too. I have learned how to work professionally within a community organization and just as important, I have learned how to communicate and socialize with communities and the diverse populations that live within them.

Learning how to step outside of my introverted ways has been one of the most difficult aspects of this experience, however, successfully doing so has taught me how to be a better communicator who is able to work with people in a very public environment. I feel like I made at least a small impact by trying to communicate to people that change is inevitable and that it is not always a bad thing, just something that needs to be understood. I also think that I helped

T.E.A.M. board members bring the community closer together by assisting in the organization of community related events where people could come to socialize and have fun, instead of always concentrating on informational meetings. The socialization of the community members have enabled us to understand what is going on in the community and how members are feeling about certain issues. This informa-

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## **AGEE Field Experience Reflections** *(Continued)*

tion can help us determine what more we need to do and how to go about doing it.

One specific area that could improve is the cooperation of all BOD members in being open-minded and on the same page, rather than randomly going off in different directions, causing confusion and animosity among the members. Trying to provide factual information while facing rumors is another challenge that we as a group continue to try and improve.

**Thomas Monroe**

### ***Preston County High School***

On a hot July afternoon last summer I got a phone call. It was my mom, and she told me enthusiastically that I got a letter about where I would be doing my student teaching. I heard her say, "Preston County," which I replied quickly saying, "That isn't one of the schools I picked." When I got home I looked up all the fastest and different ways to get there. I had been through Kingwood and other parts of the county a few times prior but didn't have much knowledge of the area. Through visits to Preston High the semester before student teaching, I had become familiar with the program and courses that were offered to students. Since I am from an area that is a rural farming community, it almost felt like a home away from home, despite my first thoughts.

When the time came for my first day of student teaching, there were many thoughts running through my head such as "What are the students going to think of me?" and "How are they going to react with me being there?" The first weeks I watched how my cooperating teacher Mr. Wilson worked with his students. I tried to find common ground with the students as days went by and interacting with them became much easier. As the time came to start teaching one of the classes, the transition from being an observer to a teacher went better than expected.

The first class I started with was a group of five Agricultural Mechanics I students. I found out right away that it doesn't take long to go through material. I started by covering safety procedures and that took about twenty minutes. After I covered safety, I thought it was time for the students to start welding, considering I only had eighty minutes left to teach. I had students learning to strike arcs and run beads across their pieces of metal. At that point, I felt like a mad man running around while trying to keep track of their progress. There were times that I had temporary blindness, but I understood what I was getting myself into.

As the days rolled by, I slowly began taking other classes. There were some weeks when I thought I was never going to get everything done, but I always tried my best to keep a posi-

tive attitude. When Mr. Wilson told me I was going to take my third and final class, I replied hesitantly with, "Are you sure?" The confidence he had in my abilities gave me some reassurance.

There were various challenges that I faced during my experience. The biggest challenge was SNOW. Mother Nature wasn't exactly my friend during the month of February. There were people who were telling me, "Must be nice to have school cancelled every day." I had no control over the weather. It may have seemed like it was nice, but as a beginning teacher it was difficult. I could never actually get into any sort of flow or rhythm.

Another challenge I encountered were a few students that did not complete their work I had requested. When the students didn't do the work I assigned, I decided that I needed to make myself clear. As the period ended I held the class a minute or two when the bell rang. At this point I was a bit frustrated and asked the class, "Does everyone want to go back to work in the shop?" They all nodded their heads. I said "If you want to go back to work in the shop, you are going to have to start proving it." After that point, I never had any more problems with that class and they worked with renewed vigor.

The only other challenge I faced was finding lessons that corresponded with different teaching methods. Dr. Boone gave my fellow student teachers and me excellent methods to utilize in our classrooms. At times it was difficult to use every method since I am a beginning teacher and starting all of my lessons from scratch. There were times when I didn't know how I was going to incorporate these methods into my lessons, but I always tried my best to make it work.

While student teaching, I also assisted in training the parliamentary procedure and Envirothon teams. These were both great experiences, because preparing the teams was both a refresher and a new experience. In high school, I had participated in parliamentary procedure, but never heard of the Envirothon until a few years ago. Although I wasn't the only person teaching them, I gave my knowledge and opinion when it was needed. I was given plenty of excellent opportunities while I was student teaching and I am proud to say I was a part of them. There were times when it was hard to put in the extra hours at school. I found that is what teaching is all about. The experience that I've received from student teaching has been nothing but positive.

After looking back on the twelve weeks I spent at Preston High, I started out as a student and became a teacher. It was pleasure working with Mr. Wilson. The assistance and advice he

gave me was always helpful. When it comes time for me to begin my teaching career I hope to be as good. Despite my first thoughts of hearing where I was going to student teach, I don't think I would have had it any other way. So, from now on when I hear someone mention "Preston County," I'll say it was the best place for my student teaching experience.

**Brandon Sollars**

### ***Cameron High School***

The first few days at Cameron I observed Mr. Cain and each of his classes. The first class which I taught was Ag Science IV. This class had seven students enrolled in it and we worked in the agricultural mechanics shop on projects which they had started before I took over. Three days later I took control of his Ag & Nat Resources I class. I mainly focused on the material these students would need in order to earn their Greenhand Degree. About a week later I took over the hydroponics and horticulture classes. By doing this I had every single one of Mr. Cain's classes. We spent every day working to get the new greenhouse operational and cleaning the old one. Once the time had arrived to start planting plants we did so. It was nice having three hours a day working in the greenhouses as this allowed a lot of work to get done quickly and efficiently. I was in charge of these classes for about six weeks at which time I switched to Mr. Dotson's class room.

Mr. Dotson's first class I took over was the Careers in Agriculture class for eighth graders. My first day teaching them was their first day in that class as it is only a twelve week class. It was fun introducing them to agriculture and showing them the various opportunities which the Agriculture department at Cameron could offer them. We spent a week or so in the greenhouse, some time in the shop, and a few weeks in the class learning about plants and animals. They seemed to really enjoy the many different topics which we covered. The next classes I took over were Mr. Dotson's two agricultural mechanics classes. We spent a good deal of time in the shop followed by a couple of weeks in the class room going over farm safety and types of fences. I then picked up the Ag & Nat Resources I class. We covered the same material in this class as we had in Mr. Cain's class and I was able to get the majority of the students ready to earn the Greenhand degree before the banquet. The last class which I taught was Mr. Dotson's aquaculture class.

When I first started at Cameron we spent a lot of time in the meats lab preparing for the Ham, Bacon, & Egg show. It was a lot of work getting the meat ready but the rewards were great for the students. Our sale at the Marshall County Fair grounds was a success and several students went to Charleston for the state show and sale. I went with them and we had a great time. One

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# *Transitions*

## *Individual*

Keith Burdette  
 Jack Cain  
 Jeffrey Carpenter  
 Reneé Chambers  
 Steve Collins  
 Billie Davis  
 Diana Garrett  
 Carolyn Hall  
 Annie Hall  
 Jason Hughes  
 Joseph Hymes  
 Jason Knopp  
 Matthew Knopp  
 Donald Michael  
 Jamie Murray  
 Ashby Ruddle  
 John Smith  
 Brandon Sollars  
 Justin Suttles  
 Tara Tatalovich  
 Amanda Wilson

## *Former Position*

Coordinator Agricultural Education  
 Ag Teacher, Cameron High School  
 Ag Teacher, Preston County High School  
 Ag Teacher, Mineral County Technical Center  
 Ag Teacher, Lewis County High School  
 Undergraduate WVU  
 Graduate Student WVU  
 Ag Teacher, Monongalia Technical Center  
 Graduate Student WVU  
  
 Undergraduate WVU  
 Ag Teacher, Ravenswood High School  
 Wood County Technical Center  
 WV State Supervisor Ag Ed  
 Graduate Student WVU  
 Ag Teacher, Pocahontas County High School  
 Undergraduate WVU  
 Undergraduate WVU  
  
 Teacher Jackson County Schools  
 Undergraduate WVU

## *Current Position*

WVDE Lead Coordinator Agricultural Education  
 Principal, Cameron High School  
 Ag Teacher, Ohio  
  
 Ag Teacher, Pocahontas County High School  
 Ag Teacher, Lewis County High School  
 Ag Teacher, Martinsburg High School  
 Ag Teacher, Nicholas County Technical Center  
 WVDE Coordinator Agricultural Education  
 Ag Teacher, Buckhannon-Upshur High School  
  
 Graduate School  
 WV State Farm Bureau  
 Ag Teacher, Wood County Technical Center  
 Ag Teacher, Mineral County Technical Center  
 Ag Teacher, Cameron High School  
 Ag Teacher, Union Education Complex (Grant)  
 Ag Teacher, Hannon High School  
 Ag Teacher, Ravenswood High School  
 Ag Teacher, Preston County High School

## *AGEE Field Experience Reflections (Continued)*

of the students won grand champion for her eggs and sold them for a world record of ten thousand dollars. Kroger of Mid-Atlantic was the winning bidder on that item. While we were in Charleston the students toured the Capitol visited Agriculture Commissioner Gus Douglass's office and the office of the State Treasurer John Perdue. In addition to the local and state events, Mr. Cain, Mr. Dotson, and I went to three other shows to judge their entries. I learned a lot about what it takes to make a quality ham or bacon and about all of the hard work that goes into these competitions.

One day we took twenty students to a local elementary school to teach various topics about agriculture. This was a lot of fun but it was kind of hectic making the preparations. The publicity which we received for doing this was of great benefit to the program and it was neat to let the kids get a feel for what it is like to teach.

My last week at Cameron was spent in making preparations for the annual FFA banquet. A lot of work is required to make a banquet run smoothly and it can be tough at times to find enough time to do everything necessary but we got it completed. I thought that this was a nice way to end my time at Cameron. On my last day teaching I taught every class which I had how to tie a neck tie and they really enjoyed learning that skill. Even though there were a lot of nights that I came home completely drained I had a great experience at Cameron and believe it really helped me prepare to be a teacher of my own program someday.

### **Amanda Wilson**

#### *University High School & Monongalia Technical Center*

We have all heard that saying "What does not kill us only makes us stronger." It is a very true statement but I did not realize how true until this semester. We all have our ups and down in college with being homesick, the occasional failed test and skipped class, lost family members, troubled relationships and working two jobs while taking 21 credit hours (which I do not recommend). All the way through student teaching that saying was in the back of my mind to keep me going. I had a very interesting student teaching experience.

It is a scary thought that everything I had worked 3 ½ years for come down to one semester. Or I guess one day, the first day of student teaching. Everything I had prepared for the day was exhausted in the first 10 minutes and that's when the moment of truth hit me: I could either fall on my face or hit a homerun. In my case I swung and struck out with my first placement.

I come from one of the most active FFA chapters in the state. In my world - which is apparently not how the real world works - all FFA chapters are not like mine. We wanted to be there, never questioned the teacher, and did everything we were asked. He demanded and deserved complete and total respect which he was given not only his students but by all the students in the school, faculty, and community. The class room was very structured and a place where learning was constantly encouraged. I can honestly say there is very little I was taught in college about agriculture that I was not already taught in high school.

After my initial struggles, I decided that I could not take it anymore. I went to the University to withdraw and was talked into allowing them to switch my placement site instead. Two angels of teachers took me in half way through the semester and allowed me to finish out the student teaching requirements. I think this could have possibly been one of the greatest things that has happened to me in my college career.

For the first time since the beginning of student teaching I could honestly say I loved teaching which was something I thought I was never going to be able to say and really mean. The new sites created new problems and situations. The students were very different than what I was used to working with. I had an adult who was my age and all four of my morning classes were mainly special needs students. It was a great experience getting to work with them and I think they taught me more than I taught them. It was a rewarding experience for all involved. It is hard to work with students with special needs for the first time and not have them teach you a lot. When I become a teacher I will be well prepared to handle all situations and students given to me.

The FFA is one of the biggest reasons I want to be an agriculture teacher. I had the wonderful chance to train the Beef Expo and horse judging teams. I almost forgot what it was like to be in high school. We had practices after school and I really got to know the students. This is the main reason we all go into teaching. It is hard for a new teacher to go from student to teacher. I did not have this realization until the Beef Expo contest when I found myself standing in a circle of six or seven agriculture

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# ***Research in Action: Knowledge and Attitudes of West Virginia Extension Agents and High School Agricultural Educators with Regard to Meat Goats and the Meat Goat Industry***

**by Kirk, A. L., & Boone, D. A.**

Goats are known for being one of the earliest domesticated animals. However, it was not until the last decade that people started looking at goats as a valuable source of income. Goat meat is eaten more around the world than any other type of meat with goat meat representing about 65% of the red meat consumed in the world (Mauldin, 2004). The value of meat goats and production for human consumption did not catch on until the past few years. Over the past ten years the meat goat industry has been on a steady rise across the United States with most of the goat production originating in Texas. Interest in the meat goat industry has also risen in the eastern part of the United States. North Carolina is one of the many states that have seen a dramatic increase in the meat goat industry in 1995 with 27,874 head of meat goats sold at North Carolina auctions by 1998 over 35,000 goats were sold at the auctions (Luginbuhl, 2000). These figures do not include the number of animals that were sold directly off the farm.

The driving force in the meat goat industry can be credited to a number of factors. One of the major factors is the growing market for goat meat in the United States. The growing number of immigrants in the United States driving force for the goat meat market. The expanding ethnic groups entering the United States gives the future of the meat goat industry a bright future, "US census data indicated that more than 700,000 immigrants who prefer goat meat to other meats enter the USA each year" (Luginbuhl, 2000, p.1). The availability of goat meat has expanded into restaurants where it is being offered as gourmet food or as an ethnic food item. Goat meat is known for being lean, low in fat and calories, while being high in protein. As the number of immigrants entering the United States each year increases so will the demand for goat meat making for a solid and steady market.

Other factors have attracted individuals to enter the meat goat industry. Meat goats are a relatively easy enterprise to get started in as meat goats are highly adaptable to different climates and environments. They have high reproduction rates with an average of two kids being born per doe. They have high growth rates with Boer bucks reaching ninety pounds at three months of age and about two hundred pounds at one year old (Mauldin, 2004). Goats have a high carcass yield, with an average dressing percentage of 50%

(Luginbuhl, 1998). Part time farmers with limited space and facilities are able to raise enough animals to provide a supplemental income. Large scale farmers have also started incorporating meat goat enterprises on their farms. The diversification of these farms allows farmers to make use of land that cattle are unable to use. Meat goats have also been used to improve pasture conditions and feed quality, while providing additional income. Since, goats are primarily browsers and cattle are grazers they are not competing with each other for food. Eight goats can gather nutrition in an area where only one cow can roam. Thus, farmers can better utilize their land with diversification.

Growth of the meat goat industry can be seen on the farm and at auctions, as well as in the show ring. Goat shows are growing in both open and youth events. State and county livestock shows have started to include market goat shows in their youth livestock events.

With the increasing demand for meat goats and the potential benefits associated with adding meat goats to farms it is important that agriculture educators are knowledgeable about meat goats and the meat goat industry. In order for agriculture educators to be able to inform and guide youth and adults in making decisions about production, management, and marketing programs need to be provided for the educators.

The purpose of this study was to determine the knowledge and attitudes on meat goats and the meat goat industry in West Virginia by West Virginia Extension agents and high school agriculture teachers. This study examined the educational needs of educators to better educate and work with meat goat producers in their communities.

A descriptive research design was selected to collect data from high school agriculture teachers and Extension agents, who by their positions would have the information necessary to answer the research questions for this study that employed a mailed questionnaire to collect the data. The mailed questionnaire was designed to collect information from West Virginia agriculture educators about their attitudes and knowledge of meat goats and the meat goat industry in West Virginia. The target population for this study was high school agriculture teachers and County Ex-

tension agents employed in West Virginia during the first three months of 2006. Extension agents with agriculture responsibilities were selected to participate in the study. If there was not an agent with agriculture responsibilities in a county then the survey was sent to the county chair person so that each county received a survey. A total of 51 Extension agents were included in the accessible population. A total of 88 agriculture teachers were included in the accessible population.

The survey instrument consisted of fifty-five questions designed to obtain the respondents' knowledge and attitudes of meat goats. The first part of the questionnaire collected information on the knowledge level, source of knowledge, confidence of knowledge, and teaching methods of agriculture educators on meat goats and the meat goat industry. The second part of the questionnaire collected information on the perspectives that the agriculture educators had in relation to meat goats and the meat goat industry. The third and final part of the questionnaire asked educators to list areas on meat goats and the meat goat industry they were interested in obtaining more knowledge in. This section also included general demographic questions about their position in agriculture education, the types of livestock they personally own, and their knowledge of the demand, marketing, and industry related to meat goats in the area in which they serve. If the educators had attended any formal training in meat goat production they were asked to list the type of event and the number of contact hours in each event.

Over two-thirds (72.2%) of the respondents reported having no knowledge of the FAMANCHA procedure, (FAMANCHA is a procedure used to determine the parasite load of an animal by examining the lower eyelid). More than half (55.7%) of the respondents reported having no knowledge of fecal analysis and over one forth (31.6%) of the respondents reported on having no knowledge of parasite control. The most respondents felt they possessed the most knowledge in tagging followed by castration and breeds. Poisonous plants were read about the most by respondents followed by goat breeds and nutritional requirements. Show related activities such as clipping of market and registered goats and showing of market and registered goats has been seen by over one third of the respon-

dents. The most respondents reported performing themselves tagging and tattooing.

Gestation was learned the most (14.1%) by respondents in their high school agriculture education program. Respondents reported gaining the most knowledge at their home or farm on tagging, followed by kidding assistance and castration. Respondents acquired the most knowledge through work experience and on tagging, and reported acquiring the most knowledge while on the job on tagging and tattooing. Castration, vaccination programs, and parasite control were topics that respondents gained the most knowledge from formal education. The internet was the major source of knowledge on poisonous plants (19.2%) followed by diseases (17.2%) and nutritional requirements (17.2%).

The respondents had the lowest confidence in teaching about embryo transfer

(85.7%) followed by artificial insemination (73.4%), the FAMANCH procedure (71.7%), ultrasound (72.3%), and the nutrition of goat meat (71.4%). Respondents had the highest confidence in teaching about tagging followed by tattooing and disbudding or dehorning. The skills mentioned in the survey were not taught by over half to three quarters of the respondents. The topics that were taught the most by the respondents were ultrasound followed by embryo transfer and fecal analysis.

Just short of all the respondents (98.9%) agree they are in favor of the meat goat industry in West Virginia. Almost all of the respondents (92.3%) reported they see the potential of meat goats as 4-H and SAE projects. Most of the respondents (97.8%) also agree on the benefits that goats have on land improvements and management and over half (76.6%) are in favor of using goats as a supplemental income. Over three-fourths of the respondents (85.8%) reported that they would

attend educational programs on raising meat goats. Markets and marketing were reported by the most respondent to be programs that they would be interested in attending. Following closely was respondents that reported they would like to learn more about everything.

Just under three fourths (73.4%) of the respondents reported that they were aware of an interest in meat goats in their community. Over half (67.1%) of the respondents reported that the meat goat industry has increased over the past five years in their area. Over three fourth (77.9%) of the respondents reported not having formal training in meat goat production or the meat goat industry.

*Angela Kirk earned a Master of Science (2006) degree in agricultural education from West Virginia University. Dr. Deborah Boone was Angie's graduate advisor. The complete thesis can be accessed at <https://eidr.wvu.edu/eidr/documentdata.eIDR?documentid=4571>*

## ***AGEE Field Experience Reflections*** (Continued)

teachers. I am now officially an agriculture teacher. Its funny that the FFA made me want to be a teacher and that it took the FFA to make me realize that I am now a teacher. I enjoyed every minute of it minus the ice cream in the hair after the Beef Expo contest.

I'm still alive so I guess that only makes me stronger. I think Chris LeDoux said it best in the chorus of his song *The Ride ...* "Sit tall in the saddle, Hold your head up high, Keep your eyes fixed where the trail meets the sky, And live like you ain't afraid to die, And don't be scared, just enjoy your ride" Despite the bumpy road and almost drowning I enjoyed the ride.

### **Anna Warner Hundred High School**

Although I had the opportunity to work in a school greenhouse that will gross over \$20,000 this semester, my student teaching experience focused primarily on growing students and teachers. As a student teacher you are expected to accept the responsibilities of a teacher, learn from the cooperating teacher, and help the students develop; however, throughout this experience both the students and teachers have the opportunity to grow.

My experiences in the greenhouse this spring confirmed my previous experiences in growing plants. When a plant is moved to a new environment, it goes through a stage of shock and adaptation. By visiting the school several times before student teaching, meeting the students, and interacting with the students and Mr. Wilkins, I eased the shock of student teaching. By my first day, I knew several students by name and their involvement in school. My move to a new environment presented me with new situations and challenged me to adapt. The entire stu-

dent body at Hundred was less than half of my graduating class. I adjusted to the small school atmosphere by meeting all of the teachers and faculty and by attending school functions such as basketball games. I also had to adapt to a different level of motivation. By talking to the students one-on-one I found some helpful information in motivating those individuals who I seemed to be missing in my planned motivations. I learned to adapt my motivations to reach more of my students.

The right environmental conditions are vital for plants to thrive. At Hundred High School I had a wonderfully supportive environment. Mr. Virgil Wilkins, my cooperating teacher, provided me with years of experience and knowledge. He provided me with as many experiences and opportunities as he could, but was always checking to make sure I wasn't stressed. I was happy to be able to return the favor by showing him some tools that he can utilize to lighten his work load. Learning at any age or experience level is important and Mr. Wilkins was more than happy to learn from me and grow as well. The school, parents, and community were also welcoming and supportive which made my job much more enjoyable. Finally the students, although challenging at times, provided me with an excellent representation of school students.

Some plants need a little extra attention and care. I found the same with some of my students. I made connections and established rapport with some students very easily while I had to work more diligently to make a connection with other students. Perhaps one of my accomplishments of which I am most proud is with the development of my relationship with one of my most difficult students. This student tested my authority on several occasions. Some of the

other teachers told me not to bother with this student and not to give him a chance in my class, but I refused to "give up" on him. Over the past twelve weeks I have worked with him and taken small steps to develop the level of respect which I expected to receive from him.

The most rewarding aspects of student teaching are the relationships you develop with the students and the opportunities you have to watch them grow and develop. For any student who will be student teaching in the future or any teacher who would like some refreshing advice from a novice teacher, I would like to offer a few suggestions for growing students and teachers. First, become involved early (even before you are required to become involved) and stay involved throughout your experience. Your involvement helps develop rapport and simplifies the transition to a new environment. Second, don't be too proud to take advice from others around you. This tip includes your students who have many ways of teaching you information or techniques. Someone might have a helpful idea that will save you the troubles of trial and error or save you time. Next, experience as many different opportunities as you can successfully experience. You don't want to take on more responsibilities than you can handle, but new experiences are great learning tools. Usually each new experience will provide you with the knowledge and skills that can be applied to the classroom, lab, FFA, Supervised Agricultural Experiences, or other activities. Finally, don't quit on a student or a technique. Learn to modify your approach to achieve the desired result. As with any garden or greenhouse, the more time and effort you devote to your students, the more they grow, develop, and succeed.

### Important Dates

Sep 1	WVU Football: Western Michigan	Morgantown
Sep 8	WVU Football: at Marshall	
Sep 13	WVU Football: at Maryland	
Sep 19-21	WV Career Development Events	Morgantown
Sep 22	WVU Football: East Carolina	Morgantown
Sep 28	WVU Football: at South Florida	
Oct 6	WVU Football: at Syracuse	
Oct 20	WVU Football: Mississippi State	Morgantown
Oct 24-27	80th National FFA Convention	Indianapolis, IN
Oct 27	WVU Football: at Rutgers	
Nov 5	WVAEE Program and Policy Meeting	Morgantown
Nov 6	Beginning Teachers Conference	Morgantown
Nov 8	WVU Football: Louisville	Morgantown

### Email Addresses and Phone Numbers

<b>WVU-AGEE</b>	Office Fax	(304) 293-3752
Dr. Stacy A. Gartin	sgartin@wvu.edu	(304) 293-4832 ext. 4480
Dr. Harry N. Boone, Jr.	hnboone@wvu.edu	(304) 293-4832 ext. 4481
Dr. Deborah A. Boone	debby.boone@mail.wvu.edu	(304) 293-4832 ext. 4482
Daniel Shockey	dan.shockey@mail.wvu.edu	(304) 293-5190
Alice Compton	alice.compton@mail.wvu.edu	(304) 293-4832 ext. 4484
Website	<a href="http://www.caf.wvu.edu/resm/ae">http://www.caf.wvu.edu/resm/ae</a>	
<b>WVDE</b>	Office Fax	(304) 558-1055
Keith Burdette	kburdett@access.k12.wv.us	(304) 558-2347
Jason Hughes	jehughes@access.k12.wv.us	(304) 558-2347
Kelly Turley	kturley@access.k12.wv.us	(304) 558-2347
Website	<a href="http://www.wvffa.org">http://www.wvffa.org</a>	

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Agricultural & Extension Education  
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 West Virginia University  
 Morgantown, WV 26506-6108