

BEDFORD FARMING



OCTOBER 2021

SHELBYVILLE
TIMES-GAZETTE

Farmer's Discount Supply LLC

By **ZOË HAGGARD**
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Well, it started with a painful elbow.

Living in the Lynchburg area, Joey Brown and his wife Kayla of 10 years have a farm with cattle. They also run Faith Fencing and Services, which began three years ago.

Sustaining an elbow injury, Joey went to an orthopedic surgeon—a Dr. Collin Bills who along with his father, Dr. Steven Bills, own Farmington Angus in Normandy.

After exchanging business cards—and with a recovered elbow—Brown fixed and built fences for Bills' farm. And eventually “it led into what it's led into,” Brown said.

Now since the spring of 2020, the Bills and the Browns have begun Farmer's Discount Supply LLC, located at 431 Red Hill Rd in Normandy.

“We're trying to be yet another avenue for farmers to find things like gates, fencing equipment, mineral, food plot seeds...and for it to be here locally,” said Collin Bills.

Bills grew up in the Normandy area. He says farming is something he enjoys outside of his orthopedic work.

“God's blessed me in many ways. This is just the best way to use all the talents God's given me,” said Bills. His two professions may seem opposite, but Bills assures, “Being a farmer helps us be good doctors. And being good doctors helps us be farmers.”

And one thing that can be certain is, as local farmers, the Bills and the Browns know what and how to provide the services and equipment other local farmers need.

“Something you have to understand is if you you've been in the farming world the last two years, when COVID hit, things like posts, gates, anything that's metal on the farm, doubled in price...Some of these supplies, like at a grocery store, have been difficult to get at times, and not only at that, have been extremely expensive,” Bills said.

Along with providing supplies and materials, Brown said they offer building services.

“What we're trying to be is a good middle man to find not only fencing needs and equipment, but also someone who's pretty



Kayla and Joey Brown and Dr. Collin Bills

T-G Photos by Zoe Haggard

good at doing it,” said Bills.

Outside of building fences at decent prices, the Browns also provide food plot mixes from Buck Buster and are in the process of being a Tarter dealer in order to sell hay rings and Tarter equipment. And eventually, Farmer's Discount Supply looks

to make more connections with suppliers for their mineral tub and salts.

“It's just the beginnings of something that has potential,” said Bills.

“I'm excited about the growth of it,” said Kayla Brown. “And just helping the small farms. It takes a lot of money to build a

fence and if you can get it at a good price and help somebody else out that might not have the funds...why not?”

They service anyone as “far as they want to come,” Brown said, so you can schedule a visit by calling 931-307-0812 or by emailing farmersdiscountsupplyllc@gmail.com.



T-G reporter goes on first “coon hunt”

By ZOË HAGGARD

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The moon was in its crescent phase; its light muted. Fog rolled over the bean fields, curling its way through into surrounding woods. Twilight was cool, and the stars were clear.

Conditions were perfect on this mid-October night for a “coon hunt.”

This is raccoon hunting season—one by state law which begins in mid-September and lasts until Feb. 28.

Coonhound Checkers, owned by Layne Leverette of Shelbyville, was on our recent “coon hunt” perked and ready to go, the darkness of oncoming night aiding her along the way from the bed of Leverette’s truck into the fields.

Leverette unclipped her leash and off she went; her nose acting as her sight.

With a tracker, Leverette watched Checkers go 250 yards, 300, 405. Her mouth made its OWW-OWW-OWW as she began picking up the scent of a raccoon.

Checkers is a treeing walker. She has a tricolored coat of brown, black and white with those distinctive floppy ears. Her breed has one of the most sensitive noses in the animal kingdom and have an exceptional ability to corner animals that comes from decades of breeding selections.

Those generations before her aided her well this night. Within half an hour, her wide OWW bark turned sharp, signaling to Leverette that she had “treed a coon.”

Tromping through the bean stalks and jumping over irrigation channels, Leverette makes his way into the thick surrounding woods with only light from the helmets to guide the way.

But once in the thicket, Leverette spots Checkers; her body upright and her fore-paws against the trunk.

And there, up in the trees, was John Eubanks and a lynx “knocking each other out.” Maybe not. But your eyes play tricks on you in the dark.

Instead, about 50 feet up the elm tree was with certainty, a raccoon. The light

from Leverette’s helmet made its eyes glow. A few shots from his .22 rifle and the coon fell. It was a sow, weighing 12 pounds or so.

It was a good night in the world of raccoon season.

Raccoons are Tennessee’s state animal. The sport of “coon hunting,” as it is locally known, arose from farmers’ need to protect their feed and livestock, usually chickens. Today, permission is asked before using anyone’s land, and Leverette says most don’t mind. But some say you can only hunt if you promise to “kill the vermin.”

There’s not much you can do with a raccoon, except make a hat. In the olden days, it was common for rural folk to “cook the coons.” Their meat being so greasy, they had to parboil them before cooking it over a fire or in an oven, Leverette explains.

That October night, Leverette left the raccoon to the coyotes, whose sharp howls could be heard across the fields where deer were hiding themselves among the stalks.

After getting her scent and taste from the fallen coon, Checkers was off again in search of her next one. Another half-hour passed and her bark changed again. Crossing through another 400 yards or so of farmland rugged with streams and long-forgotten fences, Leverette comes across Checkers again.

Not every trip is a success; that’s why nightly, consistent practice is crucial. Checkers had treed another coon. But a circle of tangled branches proved to be an escape route for the small game with its prehensile paws.

Still, Checkers had done her job for the night in preparation for the Professional Kennel Club World Championship that next week. Leverette said he and Checkers made it to the semi-finals, rewards that come only from night hunts like this one.

In waders, graciously borrowed from the Leverette family, this reporter must say the experience was a sight to behold.



ABOVE: Layne Leverette enjoys a hunt with his treeing walker Checkers.

RIGHT: Raccoon hunter Layne Leverette says it’s important for owners to be familiar with their coonhound’s specific mouth calls.

T-G Photos by Zoe Haggard



About our cover . . .

PUMPKIN PROUD, Mattie, Zeb, Adah and Micah Wilson enjoy a wagon full of pumpkins on the farm of Van and Nancy Ayers of Normandy. Accompanying them (not pictured) were Barb Bryan, Jose Lopez and Tara, Chad, and Briley Boyce, all from the Gateway Church outdoor mission. (Photo courtesy of Nancy Ayers.)

Lucas Jones family: five generations of farmers

By **DAWN HANKINS**
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Lucas Jones grew up farming cow/calf beef and hay with his great-grandfather, Wallace “Papa” Jones and grandfather Charles Jones, better known now as “Granddaddy.”

There are photos in their family album of a young Lucas and his “Papa” sitting on the farm, looking out over the crop field. Lucas says they had some great conversations—those which he still remembers when he

does his farm work.

His beloved “Papa” Jones died in 2014. His widow, Virginia, survives.

As a student, Lucas also worked at Riverbend Dairy all through high school and many years after.

He misses his “Papa” and says, “We were forced to sell the cows because I wasn’t old enough to take over at the time. I have since started my own trucking business, specializing in mostly livestock transportation and various Ag commodities—all while still

working part-time at the dairy.”

Lucas is getting a little more help now on the farm; he and fiancé Julie have plans to get married soon. “We’re working hard to save up enough money to hopefully start up another herd of cattle for my son, Carson, who makes the fifth generation on our family farm.”

Julie and little Carson are working in the dairy. Up until recently, the little fifth generation farmer, Carson, did more sleeping than anything. The sounds of the machinery

didn’t seem to bother him.

Julie says she’s proud of her Unionville farm family. She loves the life; she especially loves that her little son makes the fifth generation.

The heritage of farming, Lucas notes, goes way back further in his family history.

He smiles at Carson, who Julie has dressed in a tiny pair of overalls and farm boots.



Charles Jones, left, and grandson, Lucas Jones, enjoy many aspects of farming together, even working horses. Lucas’ great-grandfather, Wallace Jones, a long-time Unionville farmer, has passed, but Lucas said he learned much from him.



Little Carson Jones sleeps.

Photos by Sandy Watts



Little Carson Jones sleeps as his mom, Julie, works on the family dairy.



While families are selling "the farm," others are holding steadfast, like this five generation family. From left are: Lucas Jones and his great-grandmother, Virginia Jones (she is holding Lucas' son, Carson Jones); Lucas' grandfather, Charles Jones and in back is Lucas' mother, Sandy Jones Watts.

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Farmer Davis eyeing homeland security

By **TERENCE CORRIGAN**

Allison Davis knows her way around cows. She's got a fence full of ribbons, plaques and banners to prove it. She's been showing Angus since she was age 9.

"I grew up going to shows," Allison said. "I know what to look for on the animals."

Allison's lifelong experience taking care of her family's cows has matured her well beyond what you would expect from the normal 17-year-old.

"She's known responsibility," said her proud mother Loretta. "Since she was toddling around, she knew we had to get up and take care of the cattle before we opened Christmas presents. That's an Ag kid for you. She's been out in the rain and mud with us."

As she completes her last year at Shelbyville Central, Allison assumes daily responsibility for the family's herd of 45 or so Angus.

Allison is also no slouch when it comes to academics. Her grade point average is 3.9 — that's nearly perfect, a straight A average for those accustomed to letter grades.

Allison has held many positions where she's assumed responsibility. She's Class president of her senior class at Shelbyville Central High School; she's a delegate to the National Junior Angus Association meeting; President of the FFA at her school; Vice Chair of the Mid Atlantic Junior Angus Association and an Ambassador for the Tennessee Cattlemen's Youth Association.

There's no doubt in Allison's mind about the path she will follow in life; it will always involve agriculture, specifically cows. "It's always been cows," she said, in an interview at her home on Bethlehem Church Road. "It's all I've known; I haven't really thought about anything else."

Allison is the fourth generation of her family to be involved in breeding Angus. Her parents, Loretta and Mark, moved to Bedford County in 2007, from West Virginia. "We're all from up north," Loretta explained.

After she graduates from high school, Allison will be attending college at Kansas State University. She plans to major in Animal Science. She plans to work in a vital area of homeland security, biosecurity, ensuring the safety of the nation's food supply at the newly established National Agricultural Security Center, in Manhattan, Kansas.



Photo by Terence Corrigan

Allison Davis says that in working with cattle she gets to know their personalities. Although her family raises Angus, the Hereford on the left is carrying an Angus embryo.

When asked what message she has for the non farming community, she did not hesitate.

"I'd like to help educate everyday people on the food supply," she said, and let them know it's safe. The media likes to say it's not safe. We take care of our animals."



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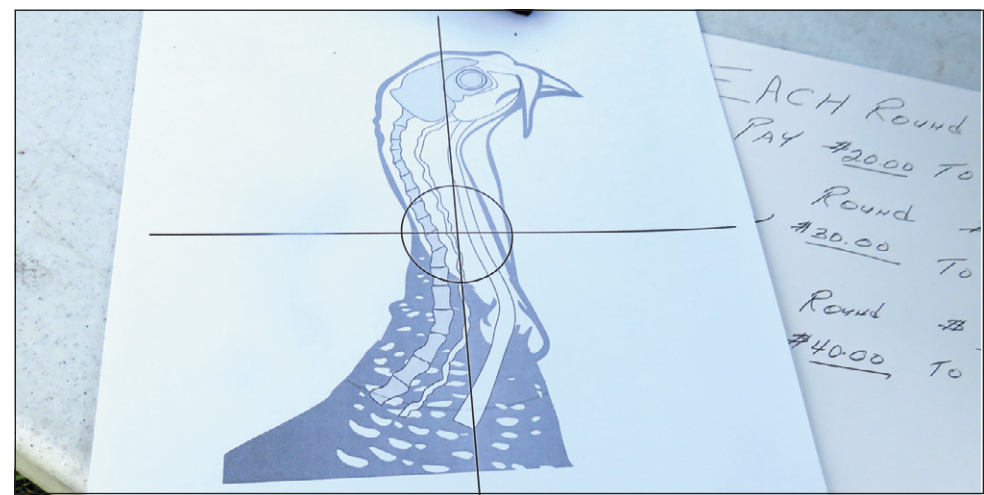
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Target shooters take aim at 'turkeys'



ABOVE LEFT: Marc Cartwright takes aim at a "turkey."

ABOVE RIGHT: The target is actually a paper drawing of a turkey — not the real thing.

LEFT: Lori Matthews of Manchester gets ready to shoot at a row of targets.

T-G Photos by David Melson

Lori Matthews tells the story of how her friends from California took the term "turkey shoot" literally.

"They thought we actually shot turkeys!" she laughed.

Those from the South know better. Turkey shoots are a longtime tradition in which shooters take aim at drawings of turkeys placed over a target. Top shooters can win cash prizes.

Such is the case each fall at the annual Lodge Turkey Shoot, held for more than 40 years — no one's sure how many anymore — in the area around Highway 82 South at the Duck River bridge. This year's edition is being held at the tire dump just off the highway. Just follow the signs and be ready

to aim accurately.

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food for needy children and families each Christmas.

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Cream of the crop - literally

By **DAVID MELSON**
dmelson@t-g.com

Nash Family Creamery near Unionville has been far more of a success than anticipated, and manager Cody Nash says it's just the beginning.

Expansion plans include additional locations and a more widespread product line, Nash said last week.

After building a quality reputation quickly on homemade ice cream from their own dairy and mouth-watering grilled cheese sandwiches, the creamery's namesake restaurant on U.S. 41A North is expanding its menu.

The restaurant now offers meats, including steaks and other beef and pork products sold by the pound, from Potts Meat Processing in Wartrace, and fresh fruit products from area growers, Nash said. Bread bowls and croissants have also been added. They'll be open all winter with warm treats as well as its famous ice cream.

"You'd be surprised at how much lunch business we get, it's awesome," Nash said.

Food selections are overseen by Cody's mom Terry Nash. Cody notes Terry has no restaurant experience, and her knowledge is truly home cooking-based — from preparing meals for her family.

Business has been excellent from the start, Cody says — even considering operations began around the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The older group has started coming back," Cody said.

He says customers from more urban areas, in particular, enjoy getting away to the rural setting of the creamery and the relaxing pace of the country farm environment.

"it's very rural yet easy to access from all over," Cody said.

With that in mind, Cody says, the family is looking to start a second store in Middle Tennessee. They're looking toward Rutherford and Williamson counties —



T-G Photos by David Melson

ABOVE: Cody Nash stands in front of Nash Family Creamery's restaurant.

ABOVE RIGHT: Curtis and Marcie Bourdier of Winchester enjoy Nash Family Creamery's trademark huge ice cream cones. "We love it - every time we go to Franklin we always stop at Nash Creamery," Marcie said.

RIGHT: Menu items include croissants and soups.

Cody mentioned Rockvale as a possibility — but could look "east or west" as well.

Nash Family Creamery's packaged ice cream is now being sold in Eagleville, Rockvale and Lewisburg stores, with plans to expand into Shelbyville and beyond.

"We're talking to other stores," Cody said. They're dealing with smaller stores first before entering the world of supermarkets.

"We want to get up to speed and be able to manufacture larger quantities before taking that step. We want to get our feet wet first," Cody said.

Also on the agenda for Nash Family Creamery is manufacturing their own cheese.

"We're trying to push into cheese making," Cody said as he showed off a recently-built, spotlessly-clean facility next to the

restaurant.

The 3,000-pound vats can hold 300 pounds of cheese. They are cutting the cheese into 8-pound blocks for retail sale.

Containers of cheese are now in the aging process under cheese maker Shawn Clement.

Nash processes its own milk, which was actually their first activity after moving to Bedford County from California area several years ago.

From lower taxes to wider-open spaces, Cody Nash says he loves living in Tennessee. He attended college in Ohio before joining his family in Tennessee.

"I absolutely love living here. I can't imagine living anywhere else," Cody said. "We've been blessed."



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Small farmers and major loans

Farm Credit financial officer weighs in

By **ZOË HAGGARD**
zhaggard@t-g.com

“A farmer wears many different hats.”

Jonathan Boyce should know since he’s a local cattle farmer and has been one since he was born.

He’s also a minister at the Flat Creek Church of Christ, a house flipper, occasional real estate investor, and father of three boys and a little girl on the way.

And to top it off, Boyce was recently named the financial officer for Farm Credit Mid-America, located in Shelbyville on Madison Street.

You could call him a modern-day Renaissance man like many other farmers who not only have to be good at producing a crop, but they’ve got to be a good financial manager.

Originally from Moore County, Boyce has been in Bedford for 10 years. With his family “steeped” in the cattle industry, Boyce graduated Tennessee Tech in December 2010 with a degree in agribusi-

ness. After an internship through Rural Development, Boyce went on to work for USDA as a loan underwriter, which “had nothing to do with farming.”

His real goal was to work at Farm Credit.

“I enjoyed lending. I enjoyed the relationships out of lending and building relationships with people. I mean, part of what I want to do every single day is just be that caring, concerned relationship lender, and Farm Credit allows me to do that,” he said.

So he started at Farm Credit in 2015 and began as consumer loan officer, doing home loans.

He primarily sells loans through developing relationships with clientele and with farmers in the area. He also advises credit quality and administration. When loans go bad or when something happens that deteriorates the financial quality of that operation, he’s out there visiting with clientele to help them restructure to help them overcome.

Boyce says a big portion of their market is part-time farmers somebody working at Cooper Steel or Jack Daniels, any big manufacturing companies, who then buys



T-G Photo by Zoe Haggard

Jonathan Boyce has been the financial officer for Farm Credit Mid-America in Shelbyville since spring.

100 acres and runs cattle on it.

Trends

It’s a trend he says is becoming common, especially in the younger generation to buy a small farm or a homestead of 20 to 40 acres to get out of the city to raise sheep,

goats, and cattle.

He should know; he bought a farm himself in 2019.

“We love the lifestyle that’s the reason why we bought the farm. We wanted our boys to grow up to be able to go back on the

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We're number one!

By **JOHN TEAGUE**

UT Extension Office

How many times have we heard this? It's usually a chant when a sports team has won or is doing well enough to win, and the energetic crowd picks up the chant to urge the team on. It's usually a good thing!

According to the last USDA Ag Census, Bedford County agriculture is number one in the State of Tennessee in several areas of production and collectively we're number one in total value of sales in the industry. Here's a breakdown of the census data. All of the data is in terms of value of sales.

To start with, we are number one in poultry income. We are number one in horse income, number two in cattle and calves, number four in milk sales, and number two in hay sales to help feed some of these animals.

We are tenth in sheep and goat sales, sixth in aquaculture, and second in other animals and animal products. Obviously, we have a very strong animal industry that far exceeds any other county in the state. The aggregate of all of these sales puts us first in income for livestock, poultry and animal products.

Bedford County is strong in the crop sales. We rank in the top one-third of all counties in the state in value of all plant-based sales. This includes grain, vegetables, tree fruits, nursery and greenhouse products, and Christmas trees.

Nationally, we're pretty impressive as well in comparison to all of the counties in the fifty states. How so? On total income, we rank 755 out of 3,077 counties in the United States. That's in the top 25% of all counties in the country!

Now there is another side to these numbers, and that's the cost of operation and the net income. While these sale numbers are really good, the net incomes have been affected by increases in input costs and the pandemic damage to the world economy.

Our Bedford County farmers feed a lot of people, directly and indirectly. As an advocate for agriculture, I'm proud of this county's contribution to feeding the world. If we continue to have more people in the world by 2050, (some say nine billion), how are we going to feed them? It'll take farmers with farms!

Think about it.



Photo by Nancy Ayers

Small farmers

(Continued from Page 9)

farm and just enjoy nature, enjoy hunting, just be able to show them what work is," he said.

But it's not easy at first for young farmers like himself. Boyce said it takes a great deal of capital and saving before buying a first farm at 20 to 25 percent down. Now 32, it took Boyce five years to raise the capital investment that was required.

"It is somewhat challenging for someone my age getting into farming..."

Helping young farmers

Farm Credit has something called a "Growing Forward" program for young and beginning farmers, where they get the "best of the best," according to Boyce the best rates and the best terms so they don't have to inject as much capital. Through partnerships with agencies like FSA, which is part of USDA, Boyce says it's possible to get a farm with no money down or maybe 5 percent down, whereas state standard real estate loans, someone who wants to buy a \$500,000 farm, they have to put \$100,000 down.

It's important to have something like Farm Credit in agricultural counties like Bedford as less and less banks become interested in working with farmers on a full time basis. It is specialized lending and many in the banking industry don't know farming, Boyce said.

So Farm Credit offers a lot of unique things banks don't like financing cattle with annual payments, patronage (being a member of a cooperative, return profits

back to customers)

"What makes us different from banks are our member-owned cooperative... that just helps farmers bottom-line," Boyce said. For example, say someone gets a \$500,000 loan for a farm. If they keep that loan for an entire year, they're getting back at least 5,000 dollars from Farm Credit. The equivalency on their rate is equivalent to at least a 1 percent deduction in their rate if they apply that back to their loan, Boyce explained.

It's risky like many things, especially since the pandemic.

"With COVID, a lot of the packaging plants, meat-packaging plants, they shut down. That backed cattle up, so that hampered the selling of cattle and the trading of cattle that broke that supply chain down. And it messes up the economics of industry as well," Boyce explained. The labor shortage doesn't help either.

"That's why it's important to have somebody who knows and understands them," said Boyce.

"We provide fixed interest rates on real estate...When we fix that, the agricultural producer knows their cost, they know exactly what they're getting into for the next 20 years. They can budget that; that helps them make the right business decisions."

That's important because it may take part-time farmers 15 to 20 years to become a full-time farmer.

It's also important to understand all this, Boyce says, because, "Here in Bedford County, you have such a diverse county-you have poultry, row crop businesses, cattle businesses, and a lot of people don't understand and know the impact they make."

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Flat Creek Farms: operating with faith, integrity

By **DAWN HANKINS**
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For Shawn Graham, there are days she is working on the farm at 1:30 in the morning, rather than sleeping, like most.

Recently, she was called out to a calving, which turned out to be a twins delivery. Then, there were the issues of “Mama” turning away one of the babies.

Shawn quickly went about to find a substitute “Mama.” She proudly shows a photo of it nursing.

While tiring work, she said it’s just a part of what she does each day of her life. In fact, she said seeing a live, healthy calf get up and nurse its momma is probably her favorite aspect of farming.

Today, (Oct. 30) the couple are hosting on their large spread—Flat Creek Farms of Flat Creek—their annual “Field Day,” which is sponsored by Bedford-Moore Farmers CO-OP. (Reservations must be made for lunch by calling 931-695-5575.) The event, which is from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., is an educational time for cattle farmers.

Shawn, a retired real estate broker, and partner Mike Hammers, a retired row crop farmer from Mississippi, started in the cattle business 6 years ago when they purchased 84 registered Red Angus bred heifers with the intention of “slowing down” their way of life.

They got into the cattle business in their

late 50s. But both still have the same drive to succeed.

They said they’ve learned a lot since opening Flat Creek Farm. And it doesn’t seem like they’re slowing down a lot.

For Mike, it’s in his blood; his grandfather row cropped and had cattle. As a young man, Mike spent many summers working along side his grandfather.

He knew then he wanted to be a “steward of the land” at a very young age. He row cropped in the Mississippi Delta in 1980 and later relocated here.

From a business and real estate perspective, Shawn was amply equipped with skills to handle the farm’s day to day sales and events.

Still, as “first generation cattle farmers,” they faced quite a few struggles the first year. This made them realize they needed to learn as much as possible about their way of farming.

“We sought advice from some of the best breeders in the Red Angus Association,” Shawn said.

She also mentioned a lot of vets and John Teague, Bedford County extension agent, for also being mentors.

The two clearly explain that developing cattle doesn’t just equate to “feeding them.”

“We struggled with the one size fits all



Shawn Graham and Mike Hammers are first-generation farmers.

with the feed we were buying and decided to make the financial commitment to start mixing our own feed here on the farm,” said Mike.

Flat Creek Farms sells bulls and heifers private treaty. While they have participated in auction sales in the past, they see the value in having potential customers come to the farm.

Theirs is a “no pressure” environment.

Shawn said the farm’s agriculture focus is on producing a balanced trait, phenotypically sound cattle, that is. “We don’t chase trends or extremes.”

The couple realize now there’s high demand for their Red Angus cattle, which traditionally possess a high rate of fertility and longevity.

As for those little twins, which turned out to be a male and a female, Shawn says when this happens, the female is typically

sterile. She’s praying through the genetic process this is not the case.

When a set of twins is born and one is a bull calf and the other a heifer, more than 90 percent of the time, the female is infertile, Shawn explained. “This is called a freemartin.”

This happens because early in the embryonic development, it’s common for the separate embryos to fuse and share the same blood supply, she said. Again, faith plays a big role in such events.

As well, the two farmers note they try to provide excellent customer service. They’re convinced it has helped them succeed in their mission of being the “go to farm” in the southeast for quality, registered Red Angus.

“Our operation is led by faith and integrity,” said Shawn. “We’re committed to the Red Angus.”

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Whitney Danhof,
Yesenia Garcia,
Kim Harvey

 **4-H and Youth**
Emily Osterhaus,
Sean Giffin

Programs in agriculture and natural resources, 4-H youth development, family and consumer sciences, and resource development. University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture and county governments cooperating.



Left to Right: Yesenia Lira-Garcia, Whitney Danhof, Emily Osterhaus, John Teague, Kim Harvey & Sean Giffin.

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