

AgFocus

White County/Sparta Farming and Agriculture

June 2024

A Special Supplement to

The Expositor



Cow from Rawly-Mae Farm. Read about them on page 5.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 3 White County Census of Agriculture
- 4 Greene Acres
- 5 Rawly-Mae Farm
- 6 Rawly-Mae Farm (continued)
- 7 Smith Farms
- 8 Roberts Five Farms
- 9 Canning 101



GREENE ACRES. Canned green beans. Read more about Greene Acres on Page 4.



COLTON OLIVER. Colton Oliver feeding his cows.

2022 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE

County Profile



White County Tennessee



Total and Per Farm Overview, 2022 and change since 2017

	2022	% change since 2017
Number of farms	815	-16
Land in farms (acres)	107,015	-10
Average size of farm (acres)	131	+8
Total (\$)		
Market value of products sold	34,553,000	+13
Government payments	510,000	-45
Farm-related income	1,918,000	+4
Total farm production expenses	31,824,000	-3
Net cash farm income	5,157,000	+711
Per farm average (\$)		
Market value of products sold	42,396	+35
Government payments ^a	8,227	+182
Farm-related income ^a	7,350	+28
Total farm production expenses	39,048	+16
Net cash farm income	6,328	+866

1

Percent of state agriculture sales

Share of Sales by Type (%)

Crops36

Livestock, poultry, and products64

Land in Farms by Use (acres)

Cropland45,078

Pastureland32,854

Woodland21,461

Other7,622

Acres irrigated: 379

(Z)% of land in farms

Land Use Practices (% of farms)

No till10

Reduced till4

Intensive till7

Cover crop5

Farms by Value of Sales

	Number	Percent of Total ^b
Less than \$2,500	281	34
\$2,500 to \$4,999	90	11
\$5,000 to \$9,999	104	13
\$10,000 to \$24,999	149	18
\$25,000 to \$49,999	88	11
\$50,000 to \$99,999	43	5
\$100,000 or more	60	7

Farms by Size

	Number	Percent of Total ^b
1 to 9 acres	80	10
10 to 49 acres	306	38
50 to 179 acres	278	34
180 to 499 acres	108	13
500 to 999 acres	29	4
1,000+ acres	14	2

Greene Acres is definitely “the place to be”

RACHEL AUBERGER

staff writer

Down in Hickory Valley, there's a farm. It's not new. It has been there for generations. But last year, a new farm was added to the family property. Hickory Valley Produce and Greene's Quail Farm, along with a crafting business named Greene Acres, opened at 4137 Hickory Valley Rd., in Sparta.

“We have lived on our farm since 2006,” Tabetha Greene said, referring to herself and her husband Jason but said the property has always been involved in family farms. “This portion of the farm that we live on was farmed by my grandfather. He ran a dairy farm here while my father had one on the other side of the road.”

Tabetha said she and Jason always knew they wanted to make a business out of something they enjoyed doing together, and farming just made the most sense. But White County has an abundance of farms, meaning that the Greenes were going to have to do something to make their farm different if they wanted to be successful.

“Quail,” she said, saying that's what makes their venture different than any others in the area. “We offer fresh quail meat that is locally grown on our farm.”

The farm also offers live quail, quail eggs, and pickled quail eggs to shoppers – whether they are shopping with them through a visit to the farm, calling or texting them, Facebook messages, or by meeting them at the local farmers' market or Sparta's Green Market during the summer months.

“We also offer a variety of fresh produce along with lots of canned vegetables and jams from items grown on our farm,” Tabetha said. “And we have both fresh and pickled chicken eggs if someone is not interested in quail eggs.”

Tabetha said that she and her husband started their farm with just five quail, but, in a year's time, the operation has grown to having close to 300 birds on the farm daily. The venture is quite an undertaking as both of the Greenes work full-time jobs away from the farm, so they have to devote their early morning and late evening hours as well as weekends to managing the quail, the produce, and keeping up with Tabetha's quilting and crafting for Greene Acres.

“We always like to hear from our customers and making new friends in our community,” Tabetha said and encourages people to contact them often

at (931) 808-7001 and (931) 808-6097. “If there is something they like, and it's available for us to grow, we will grow it!”

As for the Greenes, they are doing exactly what they set out to do, making a business out of something they enjoy, and they are very happy with the results.

“It gives us the satisfaction of helping our neighbors get locally grown food and offering something that no one else locally does,” Tabetha said about what makes all the extra work worthwhile.



Making life their own way at Rawly-Mae Farm

RACHEL AUBERGER

staff writer

In the north end of White County, nestled in on Ray Cemetery Road, is a farm. A farm that started as a dream of raising two children with all the wholesomeness and joy that comes from growing up surrounded by the hustle, bustle, and joy that comes with farm life. Little did Joni and Daniel Trivette know how quickly Rawly-Mae Farm would grow or how it would become not just the place they raised their children but also a way of life and their livelihood at the same time.

Rawly-Mae Farm, named after their children by combining their son's nickname with their daughter's middle name, was established in September 2021.

"We've always been animal lovers and dreamed of owning our own farm since we met," Joni Trivette said.

Joni said after their daughter, Elyza Mae, began riding horses in 2018 at the young age of 2, the farm began to be something she and her husband started thinking about more and more.

"She fell in love with riding," Joni said. "Her grit and determination to ride is just naturally in her. So, in 2020, our family purchased an \$800 retired barrel horse, and not long after my mom purchased the kids a pony as well. Unfortunately, the property we owned was not sufficient for us to safely house the animals we had and the other livestock we were wanting to invest in."

The Trivettes realized paying boarding fees for the horses and a mortgage for their home was not ideal, and they decided they needed to make a move.

"We didn't realize at the time we would turn it into a business opportunity," she laughed and said they began searching real estate listings for farms - a search that only took an hour before they located the beautiful farm in the northern portion of the county. "Offers were exchanged, deals were made, our house we built from the ground up as newlyweds in 2013 was listed."

While both Joni and Daniel were raising two young children and working full time jobs, she as a teacher and he as a police officer, they managed to sell their first home, close on the farm, start a remodel on both the new house and the barn, and move their animals to the farm - all while living on two twin beds in the basement of their new home.

"Many times that year, we questioned our sanity and if we were making the

right decision, but our children's love for horses and animals along with their eagerness to participate and learn more about livestock gave us the reassurance we needed," Joni said.

It was their son's interest in bull riding and a goal to one day raise "bucking bulls for competition" that started Rawly-Mae Farm in the direction it has headed for the past two years.

"Ralston's interests led us to purchase a 10-month-old miniature highland lowline cross bull for him to raise," Joni explained. "It was this lone purchase that caused our farm to spiral into a full-blown livestock operation."

In March 2022, Rawly-Mae Farm became a registered livestock dealer with the USDA and began buying and selling cattle as well as building up their own herds.

"Things around the farm were moving and life was moving at full speed. We had turned our small farm into a miniature animal headquarters," Joni said. "We expanded out to purchasing llamas, alpacas, donkeys, mules, more and more cattle, horses, ponies, chickens, and so on."

Joni said people from all over the United States were reaching out to Rawly-Mae Farm in hopes they could help them make their livestock dreams of miniature animals come true. In addition, they began hosting birthday parties and providing pony rides and horse lessons.

"We were doing all of this while still working two full-time jobs and raising two kids," Joni said, but a new assignment within the school district that would move her away from her children changed everything. "I was given a new placement within the school district that put a lot of strain on our family and farm. Our son is type 1 diabetic and needs me pretty much around the clock, so not being in the same building with him at his young age was something we had to consider. We were at a crossroads in life I never expected to be in."

Adding to the new stress, Daniel suffered a fall in spring 2023 while repairing lights on the farm's livestock trailer. He suffered a compound fracture to his tibia and fibula in his left leg which required him to be airlifted to Nashville.

"My heart sank, my world was spinning, how was I going to manage a full-time job, two kids, a broken husband, and keep the farm going?" Joni said she asked herself but the answer was evident. "At the end of the 2023 school year,



after two degrees and 11 years of teaching special education, the only thing I'd ever wanted to do, I knew I couldn't return to teaching."

Joni said it was her faith that kept her grounded during the stressful year, and it was her faith that helped her step out and do what she felt was the best thing for her family - something she hasn't regretted.

"I thought of Peter in the boat while the storm blew around him, and Jesus calling him to step out on faith. As long as Peter kept his eyes of faith on Jesus and not the storm, he defied the impossible," she explained. "Teaching was my boat, but in it there was a storm in my heart. So as a family, and through the guidance of the Lord, we stepped out in faith that our family and our farm needed to be my full-time job. Peace and blessings have come since then."

In 2022, Rawly-Mae Farm sold 60

head of livestock across six different states. In 2023, that number grew to 144 head of livestock to 12 different states, and, to date in 2024, they have sold 200 head of livestock in 16 different states. They opened a self-serve roadside farm stand on Ray Cemetery Road and offer fresh eggs, garden vegetables, fruits, homemade jellies and jams, fresh bread, cut flowers, firewood, and other homemade goodies.

Rawly-Mae Farm, which specializes in livestock sales - specifically miniature cattle (Highlands, HighParks, Herefords, jerseys, lowlines, Dexters, zebus, cross-breeds), has expanded to add a poultry breeding program which includes polish and silkie chickens and most recently Emu.

"It has turned into a full-time job from sunup to sundown," Joni says about the farm which began with a dream of giv-

CONTINUED ON 6

CONTINUED FROM 5

ing her children a couple of horses and a cow, but has grown to buying, selling, raising, and hawking and delivering livestock around the country. "Daily operations vary from day to day."

Joni says after the kids are taken to school and Daniel heads off to work, she begins feeding and animal care.

"Usual care begins in the basement with the incubators and brooders, then outside to the barn where routine feeding, animal checks, cleaning, etc. happen. Our Facebook page and website are also maintained throughout the day as well as answering phone calls and completing all required paperwork for the farm sales," she said about a typical daily routine. "We've been heavily prepping for our garden, so we have a mini garden growing in our basement right now that needs tending, too."

"Traveling has become a huge part of our lives now," Joni continued. "We often travel to several other states in search of livestock so that our area has miniatures available at a reasonable price. Once animals are brought to our farm, we follow strict guidelines in vet care, vaccinations, and maintenance for the animals."

But the Trivettes aren't stopping the farm's expansion. They want to be able

to provide the experiences their children are having with other children across the region.

"We plan to offer scheduled farm visits and experiences starting summer 2024. These types of visits will include farm-type activities, feeding, bottle feeding, grooming, among other things," Joni said. "We are also open to photographers

using the farm and encourage it, and we still offer pony rides and parties."

While life is busy at Rawly Mae Farm, the Trivettes say they wouldn't trade it for the world, and they are confident the decision they made to move, raise their children on a farm, change their entire lives, and love the land was the right one.

"The farm and livestock business has

brought so much enrichment and blessing to our lives," Joni said. "We are able to provide our kids with knowledge and experiences most people will never get. It has given us the ability to work from home and be readily available for our kids. We hope to eventually homeschool our children, so they are gaining more than just classroom knowledge."



SMITH FARMS



SMITH FARMS. Britton Smith driving a tractor.



THOMAS STEELMAN. Feeding his chicks and watering his calves.



ROBERTS FIVE FARMS



ROBERTS FIVE FARM. Dylan, Taylor, Ollie-Mae, Opal, and Vance Roberts.

Canning 101: Shelf-stable summer tips

By ELLEN JONES
Sparta, TN Local Canner

- 1. Use tested Recipes.** Follow recipes from sources that are trusted and known.
- 2. Invest in a quality canner.** A canner will help regulate temperature and make for an easier overall canning experience.
- 3. Pre-heat your jars.** Hot jars are much less likely to crack when filling them with hot food. Be careful handling the hot containers. This can be painful if mishandled.
- 4. Leave headspace in your jars.** Headspace is the space between the lid and the top of the food in the jar. It will

allow for pressure changes during the processing of your canned goods.

It is always a good idea to keep this space as it can cause your jars to explode if you don't have it.

- 5. Sterilize your jars and all equipment.** This will kill any and all bacteria that might still be on any equipment and it will help you avoid spoilage.

- 6. Wipe rims clean.** Make sure there is no food contaminates on the jar lids that might make for an improper seal.

- 7. Process according to the recipe.** Processing time and the ingredients that are safe will vary quite a bit between

each recipe. This is why it's important to follow these recipes.

- 8. Cool jars properly.** Let all of your jars cool naturally on a counter, table, or wire rack before long term storage.

- 9. Label your jars.** Include the date you canned each item. The seal will breakdown over time so it's important to keep them sealed so you don't consume spoiled goods.

- 10. Store jars in a cool, dark place.** Canned goods are typically able to be stored for up to a year. Check your recipes and write an expiration date on the label.



Food preservation is in the can

By MARCIA GREENBLUM
RDN, National Agricultural Library
usda.gov

Food preservation through canning has been a longtime practice in the United States. Americans ate canned food while embarking on long journeys, such as the westward expansion movement. Canning also helped America in times of need, specifically during wartime when food was in short supply. USDA's Bureau of Home Economics encouraged and instructed homemakers to preserve food through canning to ensure families and troops were fed. Viewing the USDA National Agricultural Library's (NAL) exhibit "How Did We Can" gives us an appreciation of how canning evolved from a way to feed French troops in Napoleon's army, to how today's food preservation empowers us to reduce waste and capture food at its peak ripeness.

Food preservation is an ancient practice. In the Historical Origins of Food Preservation, Brian Nummer stated, "Food by its nature begins to spoil the moment it is harvested. Food preservation enabled ancient man to make roots, live in one place and form a community. He no longer had to consume the kill or harvest immediately, but could preserve some for later use. Each culture preserved their local food sources using the same basic methods of food preservation." Canning includes curing, pickling, freezing, fermenting, and drying.

According to NAL's digital exhibit "How Did We Can?" canning wasn't al-

ways easy or safe. The exhibit contains over 100 full-text digital documents, articles, and images documenting the progression of canning practices in the United States during the 20th century, including the consequences of improper canning techniques. For example, despite the fact that the first American cannery opened in 1812, a full understanding of spoilage bacteria wasn't known until nearly a half century later. Names like Mason and Ball became part of American vernacular when they perfected the manufacture of glass jars to replace the tin cans that rusted and reacted with the acidic contents during the early years of canning.

In 1914, the Smith-Lever Act established a cooperative extension service at the land grant universities to inform people about current developments in agriculture and home economics, including how to select, prepare, and preserve food to improve public health. With the advent of refrigeration in the 1940s, home canning became an unnecessary burden. However, a resurgence in home canning occurred in the late 1980s, and with it a concern about dangerous practices, which prompted USDA to publish its first edition of USDA Agriculture Information Bulletin 539 Complete Guide to Home Canning.

An updated version of the Complete Guide to Home Canning was published in 2015 and provides clear instructions to help avoid contamination and other food safety issues. Both novice and beginner canners can also contact their local Extension representative for

resources and advice. Both resources will empower you to capture your favorite foods at their peak of freshness and nutrient content. In fact, the updated guide even has instructions for canning your own baby food. Just think of how proud you'll be when you announce at your next meal that not only was the meal your creation, but the vegetables were canned at home by the chef!



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