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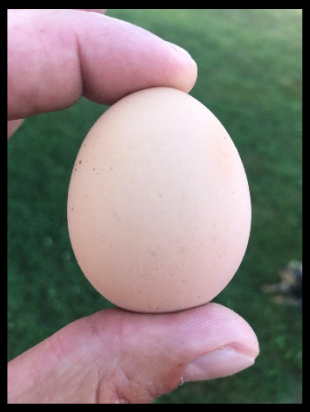
COSHOCTON COUNTY AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES



October 28, 2020 Issue

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Hello, Coshocton County! The past week has been a bit gloomy and harvest has slowed; although some corn has been run around the misty rain. It appears this week will be more of the same. But for brighter news, our weather folks are saying we should be welcomed with a nice stretch of weather as we move into November.

I would encourage producers to be in contact with our local Farm Service Agency about the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program 2 (CFAP 2) program. Nearly all agricultural commodities are eligible for payments under this program. You have until December 11 to sign-up. In today's newsletter, I have included an article I wrote for OSU Extension specifically about the beef provisions of CFAP 2.

A lot of great OSU Extension programs will also start rolling out in November. The AEDE Outlook meetings will be held virtually on November 9-13. These sessions will be a good chance to learn more about ag finance, ag and environmental policy, ag trade, health of the U.S. economy, and livestock and consumer demand projections. Have a good and safe week!

Sincerely,

David L. Marrison

Coshocton County OSU Extension ANR Educator

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

Beef Producers Should Consider Signing UP for CFAP 2

by: David Marrison, Extension Educator, ANR, Coshocton County
Source: https://u.osu.edu/beef/2020/10/28/beef-producers-should-consider-signing-up-for-cfap-2/

The COVID pandemic has created disruption in many areas of agriculture. Instead of our usual market cycles, farmers saw prices move up and down in ways contrary to typical market cycles. To help farmers mitigate the impact of the coronavirus, the **Coronavirus Food Assistance program (CFAP)** was released in April with program sign-up ending on September 11, 2020.

On September 17, the USDA announced additional assistance through a second version of this program titled **Coronavirus Food Assistance Program 2 (CFAP 2).** Nearly all agricultural commodities are eligible for payments under this program. These payments will be made for three different categories which include:

- Price Trigger commodities- suffered a five percent-or-greater national price decline in a comparison of the average prices for the week of January 13-17, 2020, and July 27-31, 2020.
- Flat Rate crops- These crops either do not meet the 5-percent price decline trigger noted above or do not have data available to calculate a price change.
- Specialty (sales-based) commodities -This category includes specialty crops and livestock. Payments will be made on sales-based approach based on 2019 sales

This article is written specifically for beef producers. Additional information for other commodities covered in CFAP 2 can be found at: https://www.farmers.gov/

Beef Cattle:

Beef cattle (excluding breeding stock) are eligible for CFAP 2 payments as a price trigger commodity. This is because the average mid-January to late-July live cattle December futures price declined by $12.10 per cwt., or 9.9 percent. Additionally, feeder cattle November futures declined 8.2 percent ($12.77 per cwt) during the same time period. It is estimated that $2.82 billion in payments will be made to beef producers in CFAP-2.

For beef cattle, payments under CFAP 2 will be equal to:

- The producer's owned inventory of eligible beef cattle, **excluding breeding stock**, on a date selected by the producer from April 16, 2020, through August 31, 2020,
- Multiplied by the payment rate of $55 per head, up to $250,000 or 4,546 head per producer.

Payment Example:

Joe Bull have a small herd of beef cattle in Eastern Ohio. The largest number of beef animals he owned from April 16 to August 31 was 72 on July 23, 2020. This included 30 brood cows, 10 fat cattle intended for slaughter, 20 feeder calves, 10 heifers, and 2 breeding bulls. In this example, Mr. Bull would be eligible to receive a payment of $2,200 for his eligible animals (fat cattle, feeders, & heifers) which were in inventory on July 23, 2020 (See Table 1).

Table 1: Example Beef Payment under CFAP 2

Animal Inventory	Number	Eligible?	Payment ($55 per eligible animal)
Brood Cows	30	No	$0
Fat Cattle	10	Yes	$550
Feeder Calves	20	Yes	$1100
Heifers	10	Yes (have not calved)	$550
Breeding Bulls	2	No	$0

Eligibility
Any individual or legal entity who shares in the risk of producing a commodity may apply for CFAP 2. Producers must be in the business of farming and producing commercially produced commodities at the time of submitting their application to be eligible. Commodities grown under a contract in which the grower has ownership and production risk are eligible for CFAP 2.

To be eligible for payments, a person or legal entity must have an average adjusted gross income of less than $900,000 for tax years 2016, 2017, and 2018. However, if 75 percent of their adjusted gross income (AGI) comes from farming, the AGI limit of $900,000 does not apply and the person or legal entity is eligible to receive CFAP 2 payments up to the applicable payment limitation.

Persons and legal entities also must also comply with the provisions of the "Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Conservation" regulations, often called the conservation compliance provisions; and not have a controlled substance violation.

Operations can qualify for up to three payment limitations if they provide at least 400 hours of active personal labor, active personal management, or combination thereof with respect to the production of 2020 commodities.

- Two payment maximum limit = $500,000 or 9,091 head.
- Three payment maximum limit = $750,000 or 13,636 head.

It should be noted the combined payment for the entity could be limited based on the percentage distribution of ownership shares of the entity.

Application:
To complete the CFAP 2 application, producers will need to reference their sales, inventory, and other records. CFAP 2 is a self-certification program, this documentation will not need to be submitted with the application. Because applications are subject to County Committee review and spot check, some producers will be required to provide documentation. Producers should retain the records and documentation they use to complete the application. More information can be found at: farmers.gov/cfap/apply.

Deadline to sign-up for CFAP-2 is December 11, 2020

Applications can be completed online, manually, or through your local FSA office. You can find contact information for your local USDA Service Center at farmers.gov/coronavirus/service-center-status. Additional information about the application process, including a Excel calculator, is available here https://www.farmers.gov/cfap.

Sources:
Coronavirus Food Assistance Program 2, Cost Benefit Analysis
https://www.farmers.gov/sites/default/files/documents/CFAP2-CBA-09252020.pdf

Coronavirus Food Assistance Program 2.0
https://u.osu.edu/ohioagmanager/2020/10/21/coronavirus-food-assistance-program-2-0/

Freezer Beef Sales Explode During COVID-19. Will Your Customers Be Ready to Buy Again?

Mike Estadt, OSU Extension Educator, Pickaway County
Source: https://u.osu.edu/beef/2020/10/28/freezer-beef-sales-explode-during-covid-19-will-your-customers-be-ready-to-buy-again/#more-9731

It is well documented that early in the coronavirus pandemic, major meat processing facilities across the United States became supply bottlenecks due to employee infections shutting down production. In response to seeing less meat available in the retail case, or limits on the amount of proteins that a consumer could purchase, farm raised, direct marketed meat, especially beef, experienced high demand.

Today it is still unlikely that you can schedule the processing of a steer until the early part of 2021. Due in part to limited space in coolers and limited workers skilled in meat processing, both custom and inspected processing facilities are struggling to meet the demand of producers wanting beef processed for direct sales to consumers.

Where is the beef supply currently and what can the consumer and local producer expect to see in the retail sector of the beef business? Cattle coming to market are heavier, thus producing more retail product to be marketed. Where is this beef going? 98% of beef is marketed as chilled fresh meat and the remaining 2%, mostly boneless beef trimmings and end meats, is put into commercial warehouses. The latest USDA report indicates the total pounds of beef in cold storage were up 5% from the previous month but down 2% from last year.

With the grilling season over more than likely freezer beef customers have exhausted their supply of steaks leaving them hamburger and roasts to eat this winter. Maybe beef councils should try a promotion for crock pot roast beef parties. Gee, it does not have the same appeal as “come over this weekend were grilling steak”.

With eroded demand from the restaurant sector and institutional buyers one might expect to see retailers trying to push the high valued cuts through the supply chain with weekly specials. Such is the case. On several recent shopping trips this author has observed and purchased the following in near “hoarding” proportions. YOUR freezer beef customers may be doing the same.

Certified Angus Beef (CAB) Boneless Ribeyes:	$9.99/lb
CAB Porterhouse Steaks:	$9.99/lb
CAB Chuckeye Roast:	$2.99/lb
CAB Ground Chuck (3 lb package):	$2.99/lb

Most spring born calves are weaned, preconditioned and may or may not be marketed. Some may be held back to finish out for freezer beef enterprises. Will you be able to sell as much as you did this past year, especially producers selling halves and whole beeves? (This is a $1200-$2500 purchase at current prices).

It may be a good time before the Holiday Season to do a quick survey of your customers to gauge how much beef they will need in the coming year. It also a nice time to say THANK YOU. It might be worth your time to drop a card or send an email to your beef customers to gauge the demand for next year. I have seen some local beef producers with websites, putting up customer satisfaction surveys. Doing this will also help you determine if you need to find additional customers to replace the whole beefs that become halves and the halves that become quarters. It will more importantly help you with scheduling with your processor.

Fall-Applied Herbicides: Odds & Ends

By: Mark Loux
Source: https://agcrops.osu.edu/newsletter/corn-newsletter/2020-37/fall-applied-herbicides-odds-and-ends

A commonly asked question about fall herbicides – how late in the fall can herbicides be applied and at what point is it too cold to apply? We have applied well into December under some very cold conditions and still obtained effective control of winter annuals. We suggest applying before Thanksgiving and aiming for a stretch of warmer weather if possible, but the effective treatments should work regardless. Extended periods of freezing weather will cause the perennials to shut down – dandelion, thistle, dock.

We received a lot of questions about annual bluegrass this year, especially regarding difficulty in controlling it in the spring. Fall is a good time to control this weed. This will require the addition of glyphosate to whatever herbicide mix is being used.

Wheat fields not treated with burndown herbicides at planting may also be subject to infestation with winter annuals and dandelion. There are several effective postemergence herbicide treatments for wheat that can be applied in November to control these weeds. Fall-applied herbicides can control these weeds (especially dandelion) more effectively than spring-applied, with less risk of crop injury. The most effective postemergence treatments include Huskie, Quelex, or mixtures of dicamba with either Peak, tribenuron (Express etc), or a tribenuron/thifensulfuron premix (Harmony Xtra etc). We discourage application of 2,4-D to emerged wheat in the fall due to the risk of injury and yield reduction.

Some resources on fall herbicide treatments in addition to last month's CORN Newsletter article:
"Five things to know about fall herbicide treatments", 2015 C.O.R.N. article (info still current)
"Reminders about fall herbicide applications", 2020 in-field Youtube video (5 min)
"Identification of Ohio winter annuals", Youtube video (30 min)
"Identification of Ohio winter annuals", Powerpoint file (so you don't have to watch the video)

For more information feel free to contact Mark Loux – loux.1@osu.edu.

Planting Fall Cover Crops

By: Sarah Noggle & Rachel Cochran
Source: https://agcrops.osu.edu/newsletter/corn-newsletter/2020-37/planting-fall-cover-crops

We are now approaching the time of year to think about planting fall cover crops. Cover crops can serve many purposes, ranging from erosion control to nutrient sequestration. Depending on the type and species of cover crop, benefits range from providing a Nitrogen source, scavenging nutrients to decrease leaching potential, acting as a soil builder, preventing erosion, fighting weeds, acting as a forage, conserving soil moisture, and enhancing wildlife habitats. Benefits of certain types of cover crops:

Legumes:
- Can be used as a Nitrogen source due to their ability to fix atmospheric nitrogen into the soil
- Many have good or excellent forage value, such as many clover species, alfalfa, and winter pea

Brassicas:
- Many are good weed-fighters, such as turnips, oilseed radish, and mustards
- Many have good grazing and forage value, such as canola, turnips, and oilseed radish

Grasses:
- Good erosion fighter due to fibrous root systems
- Many have excellent grazing or forage value
- Good nutrient scavenger due to vast root system

Cover crops can be seeded in ways to fit any operation. They can be broadcast with or without shallow tillage, drilled, aerial-seeded, or frost-seeded. There are considerations for each seeding method, however. The chosen cover crop must have seeds small enough to fall into cracks formed as the frozen ground goes through freeze-thaw cycles to frost-seed. It is often advised for aerial seeding to increase the seeding rate due to the lower chance of achieving seed to soil contact. Cover Crop stands are usually more uniform after drilling or broadcast with incorporation compared with the other methods. Cover crops emerged sooner and in higher densities after drilling compared with broadcasting (Brenan, E. & Leap, J., 2014).

Timing when you plant your cover crop species is an important step, especially as we progress into late fall. Depending on whether the chosen species is winter-hardy or winter-killed can determine when it should be seeded. What type of crops you have grown or plan to grow in your operation type and the goals you want your cover crops to achieve can dictate the planting window. To find out the ideal planting window, characteristics, potential advantages, and disadvantages for your area and chosen cover crop, visit https://mccc.msu.edu/selector-tool/ to utilize the Cover Crop Selector Tool from Midwest Cover Crops Council.

When planning how much cover crop seed to purchase, it is important to understand the concept of Pure Live Seed. Seeding rate recommendations are reported as pounds of Pure Live Seed per acre, which is calculated as follows:

% Purity * % Germination = Pure Live Seed (PLS) Rate

If you have a 62.5% PLS Rate and need to seed 15 pounds PLS per acre, you will need 24 bulk pounds of seed per acre:

15/0.625 = 24

It is essential to understand that specific programs, such as EQIP or H2Ohio, may have requirements for rates or planting dates that must be met to receive your payment. Check with your local NRCS, Soil and Water Conservation District or FSA Office for information about programs you may be enrolled in.

It is also crucial to know how to terminate the cover crop you choose to plant. Some cover crops are winter-killed, but winter-hardy species may cause problems with the following season's cash crop if they cannot be controlled or killed. Rogue cover crops can become weeds in your field and compete with your cash crop for nutrients, space, water, and light.

Soybean Cyst Nematode (SCN) Has Made Itself a Home In Ohio Planting Fall Cover Crops

Soybean Cyst Nematode (SCN) has Made Itself at Home in Ohio

This invasive species has adapted quite well to Ohio conditions, and is unfortunately doing very well in some fields based on egg counts. We are wrapping up intensive sampling of Ohio Fields from the support of the soybean check-off through Ohio Soybean Council and United Soybean Board. To date, 566 samples were submitted from 34 counties. From these, 33.7% had populations of 200 eggs or more. There were 7.6% in the high range (>5,000 eggs per cup of soil), which are associated with significant yield losses.

More importantly, from these samples that had high numbers, we have completed the SCN Type test. This evaluates which resistance will be effective, PI 88788 or Peking. From the 56 SCN populations (each from a single field), only 7 populations were still controlled by PI 88788. The remaining populations could reproduce on the soybean roots of the PI 88788 source of resistance, albeit at levels of 30 to 60% of the susceptible. Remember that SCN resistance mechanism is by means of reduction in reproduction to less than 10% of a susceptible variety. Peking fared better in the test, where almost half of the populations, it was very effective and where it could reproduce it was primarily in the 10 to 30% range of reproduction compared to susceptible. What this would look like in a field is the egg counts would show a slow steady climb when

planted to soybeans, and not the reduction in numbers like we would expect if the resistance was effective. We still have some samples to complete, but overall SCN is best managed when the population levels (based on egg or cyst counts) in a field (overall numbers) are kept low. This is done through rotating crops to a non-host crop, managing weeds that can serve as hosts (including some cover crops) and protecting the overall health of the plant through the growing season. As you select varieties for this next year – PI 88788 resistance will provide some protection; but watch your egg counts and your yields. Check the county average – was this field lower? On your yield maps are there areas that are consistently underperforming without any explanation? If they are large or you know you have a high SCN population, after you plant corn or hopefully wheat for 2021– go back into that field with a different type of resistance such as Peking to keep driving the numbers down.

Agricultural Policy & Outlook Conference

By Ben Brown, AEDE & OSU Extension
Source: https://agcrops.osu.edu/newsletter/corn-newsletter/2020-37/agricultural-policy-and-outlook-conference

On November 9th-13th, OSU's College of Food, Agriculture, and Environmental Sciences will host the Agricultural Policy and Outlook Conference. The conference will be a series of two-hour online webinars Nov. 9, 10, 12 and 13.

Each day will focus on a different topic. Nov. 9 will be on agriculture finance, Nov. 10, agricultural and environmental policy; Nov. 12, agricultural trade and the health of the U.S. economy; and Nov. 13, grain, livestock and consumer demand projections.

Agricultural economists from CFAES will speak along with other experts from Washington D.C., other leading land grant institutions, and the Federal Reserve System. The webinars begin at noon and include a daily panel discussion that starts at 1 p.m. and invites people in the audience to ask questions.

Speakers at the conference will offer their recap of 2020 and outlooks for 2021 at the national, regional and local levels, Brown said. “Our hope is that people who come gain knowledge to use to influence their businesses.” To register and for more information about the conference, visit https://aede.osu.edu/programs/20202019-agricultural-policy-and-outlooks.

Farmer & Farmland Owner Income Tax Webinar

By: Barry Ward, OSU Extension
Source: https://agcrops.osu.edu/newsletter/corn-newsletter/2020-37/farmer-and-farmland-owner-income-tax-webinar

Do you know how the COVID legislation may affect your tax return? Do you know how equipment trade-ins may affect your federal and state tax returns? Farmers and farmland owners who wish to increase their tax knowledge should consider attending this webinar that will address tax issues specific to this industry. Content focuses on important tax issues and will offer insight into new COVID related legislation.

Mark your calendars for December 3rd, 2020 to participate in this live webinar from 6:30 to 8:30 pm. The event is a joint offering from OSU Income Tax Schools which are a part of OSU Extension and the College of Food, Agricultural and Environmental Sciences and Purdue University Income Tax Schools. If you are not able to attend the live webinar, all registered participants will receive a link to view the recorded webinar at a time of their convenience. This link will be available through the tax filing season.

The two-hour program is targeted towards owners who file their own farm taxes or simply wish to arm themselves with more tax information that will help them to better plan for tax filing. Topics to be discussed during the webinar include:

- Tax Issues related to COVID-related legislations including tax credits, PPP loans, EIDL loans etc.
- New 1099-Misc and 1099-NEC

- Tax planning in an unusual year: prevented planting and revenue crop insurance indemnity payments, CFAP payments, etc.
- Like Kind Exchanges (farm machinery and equipment no longer are eligible for this provision – this is a significant change), how this change may affect state income tax and how this change may affect your Social Security credits and eventual payments
- Qualified Business Income Deduction, sales to cooperatives, lease income

The cost for the webinar is $35. To register, go to https://farmoffice.osu.edu/tax/farmer-and-farmland-owner-income-tax-webinar

Spotted Lanternfly Educational Opportunities

Spotted Lanternfly Educational Opportunities
By: Amy Stone
Source: https://bygl.osu.edu/node/1715

With the recent announcement made about spotted lanternfly (SLF) yesterday by the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA), people may be seeking educational opportunities to learn more and stay up-to-date on this new invasive species officially detected in Ohio.

The first program is part of Emerald Ash Borer University (EABU) and is scheduled tomorrow, Thursday October 29 at 11 am EST. The session topic is: What We Know So Far -- How Feeding & Mating Behavior are Related to Lycorma delicatula Flight Dispersal

Tom Baker with Penn State University's Dept. of Entomology will be presenting this free virtual program. The presentation involves the study of flight dispersal of Lycorma delicatula in PA -- are there predictable directional and distance components that could help predict new locations to which the infestations may spread? In 2017 and 2018, adults were observed launching themselves into the wind from all types of host and non-host trees, or from porches, posts and other human-made structures.

To learn more and check out this session live, or catch the recording at a later date, visit the regional EAB website
at: http://www.emeraldashborer.info/eabu.php

Photo Credit: Amy Stone, OSU Extension - Lucas County

The second opportunity will be offered on Friday, November 13 from 10 am - 12 pm as part of OSU's Woodland Stewards Program, Spotting the Spot: A National and State Update on the Spotted Lanternfly.

The session will address what's is happening in the world of SLF. Participants will learn the latest on SLF in the US and in Ohio – where is it and what can you do. From trapping and monitoring (humans and dogs), to its modes of movement (natural and human assisted)– this one is a hitch hiker, and the latest on host plant observations and research, you won't want to miss this update.

Credits for this session include: SAF CFE's - 2.0 hrs and ISA Credits: Certified Arborist: 2 Utility Specialist: 2 Municipal Specialist: 2 BCMA - Science: 1 BCMA - Practice: 1 TW Climber Specialist: 2 TW Aerial Lift Specialist: 2

To register for this free virtual session, check out this link:
ttps://woodlandstewards.osu.edu/events/spotting-spot-national-and-state-update-spotted-lanternfly

In addition to these two educational programs, stay tuned to BYGL for timely updates on SLF.

Are Woolly Bears Weather Prognosticators?

By: Joe Boggs
Source: https://bygl.osu.edu/index.php/node/1713

Bristly "woolly bear" caterpillars commence their annual crawl-abouts in search of sheltered winter quarters in the fall. You may see noticeable numbers crossing roads with some unfortunates becoming laminated onto tires. Their crawl-abouts may start as early as late September and continue until early November in Ohio. It depends on the weather.

Woolly bears (woolly worms in the south) are the caterpillar stage of medium-sized moths known as tiger moths (family Erebidae; subfamily Arctiinae). The caterpillars are so-named because of their short, stiff bristles. The sharp-pointed bristles

serve to defend the caterpillars. However, they are not stinging hairs; they do not inject venom. Still, some people suffer severe localized reactions if the hairs penetrate their skin.

Woolly bears will roll themselves into a tight ball when disturbed to bring to bear their defensive bristles. Their resemblance to hedgehogs is referenced by the alternate common name "hedgehog caterpillars." You may see this defense posture in response to various wasps such as yellowjackets (family Vespidae) that attack and feed on caterpillars.

Four of the most common woolly bear species found in Ohio are the banded woolly bear which develops into the Isabella tiger moth (*Pyrrharctia isabella*); the yellow woolly bear which develops into the Virginia tiger moth (*Spilosoma virginica*); the salt marsh caterpillar which develops into the salt marsh (tiger) moth (*Estigmene acrea*); and the giant leopard moth caterpillar (*Hypercompe scribonia* (syn. *Ecpantheria scribonia*)).

These woolly bear caterpillars may be found feeding on a wide range of plants including some field crops. In fact, crop harvests commonly produce an early flush of caterpillars crawling across nearby roads.

The four species of woolly bear moths have two generations per season in Ohio with the largest number of caterpillars occurring in the second generation. This is one reason we typically see more caterpillars in the fall. Of course, the other reason is that their mass fall crawl-abouts in search of protected winter quarters commonly bring them out onto hiking trails, sidewalks, roads, and up onto the sides of homes and other structures.

Research conducted by Jack Layne, Department of Biology, Slippery Rock University, revealed that the woolly bear caterpillars of the Isabella tiger moth and the giant leopard moth produce antifreeze-like chemicals, collectively known as "cryoprotectants," to prepare themselves for winter. The cryoprotectants prevent sharp-pointed ice crystals from forming which would puncture cell membranes.

Do Banded Woolly Bears Predict Winter Weather?

The banded woolly bear (*P. isabella*) is the species most often referenced as the "official" predictor of winter weather for one obvious reason; it's banded. Giant leopard moth caterpillars are completely black which may provide a good excuse to spend the winter in Florida.

According to folklore, the greater the amount of black on a banded woolly bear, the more severe the winter weather. Also, the position of the widest dark bands predicts which part of the winter will be the coldest. If the dark band is widest at the head end, the beginning of winter will be severe. If the dark band is widest at the tail end of the caterpillar, winter will go out like a lion. The predictive ability of the caterpillars is further fine-tuned by "reading" the 13 segments of the caterpillar's body which are said to correspond to the 13 weeks of winter.

This weather folklore dates back to the American colonial days. However, we can thank Dr. Charles Howard Curran for giving credibility to this myth; perhaps inadvertently.

Curran was a noted entomologist who served as Curator of Insects and Spiders for the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) in New York City (NYC) until his retirement in 1960. On October 27, 1948, Curran and fellow AMNH entomologist Mont Cazier, along with their wives, traveled to (Woolly?) Bear Mountain State Park about 40 miles north of NYC. They collected 15 banded woolly bear caterpillars and dutifully measured the lengths of the black end bands and rusty brown middle bands.

Curran was a respected scientist who published widely in scientific journals, most often on Diptera. There remains much debate as to whether or not this expedition was a serious attempt to test the theory wrapped in folklore that the caterpillar bands predict winter weather.

Instead of producing a scientific paper to be perused and parsed by his entomology colleagues, Curran's "survey results" predicting the winter weather for 1948 were announced by news reporter John O'Reilly on the front page of the October 28, 1948, issue of the New York Herald Tribune. Curran's caterpillars predicted a mild winter … which turned out to be correct.

Of course, this produced a demand by the Tribune readers for an annual winter weather prediction by Curran's caterpillars which continued for seven more years. I couldn't find information on how often the caterpillar predictions were correct. However, I found several reports that Curran recognized his sample size was always too small to be of any scientific value. One may assume he simply used the caterpillars for their entertainment value.

More rigorous research subsequently debunked the winter weather prediction value of banded woolly bears. The caterpillars commonly show high variability in their coloration based on their age, food sources, and moisture levels in the area where they develop.

You can see the variability in the image below. These banded woolly bears were collected on the same date from around a building in southwest Ohio that is surrounded by landscape flower beds as well as nearby crop fields or fallow ground with a wide range of native and non-native vegetation. It was not a scientific study, but no color form was excluded during the collection. I'm not making a winter weather prediction, but I like the prognostication of the soothsayer caterpillar pictured at the top which I named Optimystic.

Of course, caterpillar coloration also varies between woolly worm species. If weather prognosticators accidentally use the yellow color form of the yellow woolly bear, they would assume there will be no winter. Conversely, the mostly black color form could create mass panic causing folklorists to flee to the south for the winter!

Regardless of the folklore, I believe Curran was onto something by recognizing the pure entertainment value of woolly bear caterpillars. After all, there aren't too many insects that have engendered annual festivals in their honor. The annual Woollybear Festival has been held every fall since 1973 in beautiful downtown Vermilion, OH, on the shores of Lake Erie. The Woolly Worm Festival of Banner Elk, NC, has been held each fall since 1978 in the beautiful North Carolina High Country. Sadly, both were canceled this year because of COVID-19. But just as woolly bears will surely reappear in 2021, so will their festivals (we hope). Me and Optimystic are planning some road trips!

Check out
http://go.osu.edu/coshocton-agnews
for back issues of the Coshocton County Agriculture & Natural Resources Newsletter