

FALL  
Farm &  
Ranch



# Putting Up Summer's Bounty

A garden full of goodies is the best way to end your summer. This is where the work of growing ends and the work of eating begins.

Some of your bounty you'll eat immediately, served fresh or cooked, but other produce you can put up for the long winter ahead. Here are some tips for enjoying your garden's treasures all year round.

## WHAT IS CANNING?

Canning homegrown food, the National Center for Home Food Preservation at the University of Georgia says, can cost you about half of what it canned food costs in the store. By canning fresh foods properly, you remove the oxygen from the food environment, meaning bacteria, yeasts and molds can't grow on the food and it stays fresh longer.

## HOW TO CHOOSE FOOD TO CAN

There are different methods to can different types of food safely. All of your food should be fresh-picked, washed and peeled. Most foods you can should be hot packed, and many should also have an acid, such as lemon juice, added. Foods with a higher acid content, such as berries, apples, cucumbers and more, can be canned in a water bath or pressure canner. Low-acid



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foods, such as corn, peas, onions, carrots and squashes, must be canned in a pressure canner to be safe.

## HOT WATER VS. PRESSURE CANNING

Hot water canning means you immerse the jars in boiling water for an allotted time. The water, which should be at least an inch over the top of the jar, will seal the lids and

force out oxygen. This method is preferred for high acid foods and recipes. Pressure canning involves using a large pot with a clamp-on or screw-on lid. The pressure that builds up inside the canner doesn't kill the harmful beasts in the food, but it does allow for the food to reach higher temperatures, which does kill the microorganisms. At sea level, the NCHFP says, a pressure

canner at 10.5 lbs. provides an internal temperature of 240 degrees.

## STORING CANNED FOODS

Home canned foods should be stored in a cool, dry, dark place. Exposure to temperatures more than 95 degrees or direct sunlight will cause the food to lose quality or spoil. Moisture can wear at metal

lids and rings, breaking seals and allowing contamination and spoilage. Signs of spoilage in home-canned foods include growth of bacteria and the presence of gas which swells the lids and breaks the jar seals. The food may change color or you may see air bubbles rising through it. Smell for bad odors when you open the food and look for cotton-like mold growth.

# Livestock Feed Price Trends

As the world as a whole became richer (and therefore including more protein in their diet, such as farm-grown chickens, cows and pigs), the demand for and price of animal feed shot through the roof.

You may have noticed that, on your own farm, prices for livestock feed have increased more than 20% just this year, Bloomberg says.

## EFFECT OF THE PANDEMIC

COVID-19 did dent the demand for animal feed somewhat as the food service and hospitality industries around the world crawled to a halt in response to travel restrictions and lockdowns around the globe. However, as more countries open, the demand is growing on animal feed crops such as wheat, corn and soybeans. Record prices for livestock for the food market are driving up the demand for both food animals and their feed.

The cumulative effect? Higher prices for meat and for livestock food, even as food supply chains struggle to stabilize in the wake of the pandemic.

## PRICING TRENDS

The last time feed prices



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were this high were after a U.S. drought in 2012, Bloomberg says, during which time meat prices also skyrocketed. Bloomberg says that grain crops that drive livestock feed markets are pinched both by the pandemic and to bad weather worldwide cutting down on world harvests. In Brazil, feed costs drove up the

cost of raising chickens by nearly 40%. This may cut smaller producers, who can't afford to weather the slim margins, out of the market entirely, Bloomberg analysts warn.

## HAY AND FORAGE

Prices of hay and alfalfa continue to climb in the U.S.

Alfalfa spiked another \$5 per ton in June, the USDA said, the seventh consecutive month alfalfa posted a month-over-month gain. Other hay is also climbing in price, though not as sharply as alfalfa. It's up nearly \$12 per ton over a year ago, the USDA says. Drought conditions from the 2020-2021 winter are pushing the increas-

es, analysts said. Furthermore, increasing prices for grains like corn could lead farmers to plant acres previously devoted to forage in row crops instead, lessening the available supply. Locally, prices can fluctuate due to weather, experts said, meaning your farm should prepare now for higher prices if a storm comes through.

# Adopt or Buy a Mustang or Burro

The Bureau of Land Management, part of the U.S. Department of the Interior, adopts out wild horses and burros each year.

Since 1971, more than 240,000 mustangs and burros have gone to private homes to become pleasure, show or work animals. Each mustang carries a freeze mark on the left side of the neck that identifies it as a registered wild horse or burro. It also denotes the animal's birth year and registration number.

You must first fill out an application and be approved to adopt or purchase a horse.

In adoptions, the BLM retains ownership of the animal until you are granted the title, usually about a year after the adoption date. Purchasing means you own the animal immediately, but only certain mustangs and burros are available for immediate purchase.

Fees for mustangs or burros range from \$25 to more than \$125. If you have to return your animal, the fee is non-refundable. Adopted animals must remain in the U.S. until titled, and no adopters with past convictions of inhumane treatment of animals or violations of the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act will be considered.

Adopters must have a facility with access to food, water and shelter, and they must provide a stock or horse trailer



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with a rear swing gate and a covered top. Slant trailers are acceptable if the dividers are removed or folded back, and drop-ramps are OK if there is additional back gate. No one-horse trailers will be approved.

Applicants must also be 18 years or older.

By facility, the BLM means that you have a minimum of 400 square feet of corral space per animal made with suitable materials, including pipe pan-

els, wood posts, planks or horse fence. Fences must be at least five feet high for yearlings or gentled horses and 6 feet high for ungentled horses two years or older. Burros require fences four and a half feet or

taller. The definition of shelter varies from region to region, so check your local requirements. Of course, you'll need to abide by any local requirements for keeping livestock as well.

# Winterizing Farm Equipment

Once the cooler temperatures of fall set in, it's time to start thinking about winterizing your farm equipment.

By maintaining your equipment in the colder months – the off season – you can spare yourself precious time during the growing season and lots of money in repair bills. Keep reading to find out how to best maintain your farm equipment during the winter months.

## SWITCH FUEL

If you've got No. 2 diesel in your equipment from the warmer months, it's time to switch to winter fuel. What's the difference? No. 1 diesel has a lower cloud point, so it gels at a lower temperature than summer fuel. But No. 2 diesel has more energy content per gallon. You'll also want to check your gasoline blend equipment to make sure it's got a winter blend of fuel in its engines, too. If you have diesel exhaust fluid in a trailer or delivery tote that could be exposed to freezing temperatures, you need to winterize the system to avoid pump damage.

## BATTERY MAINTENANCE

For equipment you're still going to use during the winter, make sure you keep the batteries as fully charged as you can. For engines that are going to stay quiet during colder



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months, disconnect the battery all together to avoid leaking. While you're under the hood, go ahead and check the fluids, making sure that your engine coolant works at lower winter temperatures. You may also need to change to a lighter weight oil and top off fuel and

hydraulic oil tanks to prevent condensation.

## CLEAN IT UP

Before the temperatures drop too low, clean off your equipment and remove plant debris and dirt – anything that holds moisture and causes rust

to eat into your machinery. Clean equipment will also help keep pests at bay and clean out your cabs and planters now to save repair bills down the line.

Inspect all your machinery for broken welds, alignment issues, wear points, loose fas-

teners or lubrication issues. Make notes on what needs attention before it's time to get planting in the spring, taking advantage of the extra time in winter to repair your equipment and get it ready to hit the ground running when you're ready to plant.

# Pandemic Farm Relief

COVID-19 shook most industries to their core, and farming was no exception.

The pandemic shut down all parts of the food supply chain, including USDA programs and offices that support farmers and ranches around the United States.

The USDA says it's starting to reopen some offices depending on where they are located. Services may be available by appointment only, so call before you go. The agency is also offering pandemic assistance for some farmers.

## CORONAVIRUS FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

This program is available to farmers who, in 2020, faced market disruptions due to COVID-19. The program was expanded earlier this year to provide more payments to cattle and row crop producers and processing some payments for other additional assistance.

Commodities eligible for CFAP assistance include aquaculture; broilers, eggs and pullets; dairy, floriculture and nursery crops; livestock; livestock by contract growers; row crops; specialty crops; specialty livestock; tobacco and wool.

Ineligible commodities include hay, crops intended for grazing except alfalfa, birdsfoot and trefoil, clover or clover crop, fallow, forage sor-



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ghum or soybeans, commercial and home gardens, grass, kochia, lespedeza, milkweed, mixed forage, pelt, perennial peanuts, pollinators, Sunn hemp, seeds of ineligible crops and vetch.

## ELIGIBILITY

Producers must have an adjusted gross income of less than \$900,000 for tax years 2016, 2017 and 2018 or derive

at least 75% of their adjusted gross income from farming, ranching or forestry-related activities. They must commercially produce eligible commodities, listed above, and comply with the provisions of the Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Conservation regulations. Foreign people must not provide land, capital or a substantial amount of active personal labor to the farming

operations. Producers cannot have a controlled substance violation.

## PAYMENTS

CFAP payments will be split into three categories: price trigger commodities, flat-rate crops and sales commodities. Each category has its own rates and tiers; visit farmers.gov/cfap for more information. Payments will be limited

to \$250,000 per person and legal entity. Special payment limitations may apply to participants that are corporations, limited liability companies, limited partnerships, trusts and estates. These legal entities may receive up to \$750,000 based on the number of members who each contribute at least 400 hours of active personal labor or active personal management.

# Harvesting Timber

Earlier this year, the price of lumber hit startling highs of \$1,670.50 per thousand board feet in May.

That was six times the price of lumber in April 2020. The spike, experts at CNBC say, was because of soaring demand and low supply, both caused by the pandemic. Closed sawmills and homeowners' desire for more space coupled to drive the prices sky high. Now, the prices are falling again as sawmills catch up and the demands for remodeling and new construction settles out, but it may still be a good time to harvest timber on your property.

## PROPER FOREST MANAGEMENT

In addition to boosting your farm or ranch's bottom line, a properly done timber harvest can also help you manage your forest, the Idaho Forest Products Commission says. A timber harvest can create wildlife habitat and remove diseased, burned or insect-infested trees. Most states and areas have laws that govern when, where and how you can harvest your timber, so consult with local authorities before starting up the chainsaw.

## TYPES OF TIMBER HARVESTS

There are four types of timber harvests the Idaho Forest



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Products Commission says.

- Seed tree harvests: This harvest leaves a small number of large, mature trees to provide seed for the next harvest of trees.
- Shelterwood harvests: More mature trees are left as a seed source and to protect younger trees from wind or sun. This works well with species that need some shade.
- Selective harvests: Only some trees are removed with

the goal to reduce forest density and competition, increasing the growth of the remaining trees.

- Clearcut: This removes all the trees and instantly increases sunlight. These types of harvests are used to clear unhealthy forests and renew them with species more suited to the area.

## FIND AN EXPERT

Timber harvesting and sell-

ing is a complicated process. You can find free or low-cost services to help with your harvest through your state forester or through the county Agricultural Service agent, the USDA says. Extension Forestry personnel are often housed at the nearest land grant university, and they may also be able to help you.

If it's time to call in a professional, look for a professional forestry consultant in your

area. They can give you advice about managing your timber, planting your timber and valuing the timber on your land. They can also help prepare for and supervise the sale of your timber, all for a fee. The USDA says to look under the Yellow Pages for Foresters-Consulting, Forestry Consultants, Foresters or even Timberland Companies. You can also ask other producers in your area who they can recommend.

# Adding Chickens to Your Farm

During the height of coronavirus food shortages, it seemed like everyone was adding a few chickens to their farms, flocks or yards.

Having a few hens around can be a great way to connect with how food is produced. Here are some tips for adding a few chickens from the University of Florida.

## OBEY LOCAL LAWS

Before you fly out to buy a coop, check the rules and regulations for your neighborhood (especially if you have a homeowners association), your city and your county. Some municipalities have regulations that restrict the location and quantity of poultry on residential properties including prohibiting roosters, roaming poultry and breed. For instance, chickens may be allowed, but not ducks or turkeys.

## SET UP SHOP

Chicken coops, as you've probably seen online, come in all shapes and sizes. You can get kits, preassembled coops or really branch out and design and build your own. Generally, chickens need a fenced yard to protect your chicks from predators; a house with three square feet of floor space per bird, at a minimum; and a top to pre-



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vent flying and climbing predators from breaking in.

Nesting boxes should measure a foot square and be half filled with straw or wood shavings. You should have one nesting box for every five hens, and they should sit about two feet above the ground.

You can put a perch in front of each box to give your hens a spot to rest. Some ideas for nesting boxes include repur-

posed buckets or milk crates.

## IT'S CHICKEN FEED

And it can get really complicated. Only a small portion of the bird's nutritional needs may be met by foraging, so picking the right feed will be critical in managing a successful flock. Commercial chicken feed comes in mash, crumble or pellets. Find the right size of feed that works for you. Pellets may reduce

waste, but may not be suitable for chicks. Experiment to see what your flock likes the best.

Starter and grower feeds contain a higher percentage of protein to meet the growth needs of young birds. Layer feeds contain enough calcium to ensure healthy egg production. You can't interchange these, as starter feeds is too rich for full-grown birds and layer feed can cause kid-

ney problems in chicks. All-flock feed is available for flocks that contain different kinds of birds and stages of life.

Don't feed your chickens raw green potato peels; plants from the nightshade family such as pepper, potato, eggplant or tomato leaves; raw, dried or undercooked beans; the skin and pit of avocados; candy, chocolate or sugar; or alcohol or tobacco.