

# SPRING

FARM & COUNTRY LIFE

April 30 & May 1, 2025 • Special Section • 12 pages



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# SPEND SOME TIME AT YOUR LOCAL FARMERS' MARKET THIS SUMMER

By **NICOLETTE NAUMAN**  
*Sentry-Enterprise Editor*

Farmers' markets are by no means a new concept. Historically, farmers' markets were the primary way most people accessed food and supplies. For much of human history, grocery stores and supermarkets as we know them today simply didn't exist. What you ate was, by and large, locally sourced—from the vegetables and fruits to the herbs seasoning the meat, which itself came from a local farm or from a local hunter.

We can trace the concept of a farmers' market as far back as ancient Egypt, as much as 5,000 years ago. These markets were places where local farmers and merchants would set up shop to sell their produce and wares. These purchases were most commonly made by trading items rather than with what we would now consider currency, and sellers would often measure out their goods by weight rather than volume.

Here in the United States, farmers' markets have been around for about as long as there have been European settlers colonizing the land. These markets were the primary means by which those living in the developing urban areas could access things they couldn't readily produce at home, such as meat and dairy products as well as fresh produce if they lacked the space for a home garden.

These markets were not just critical for the economic viability of local farmers and merchants, but they also served a key role in fostering local community and keeping the rural and the urban populations connected. It wasn't until the Industrial Revolution



**Jill Stekel (right) hands out samples of the maple syrup her family produces to a group of boys checking out the Hillsboro Farmers' Market.** Photo taken by Nicolette Nauman, HSE Editor.

that the groundwork for today's modern food supply chain was put into place. Inventions and research breakthroughs, such as how to freeze-dry produce and more efficiently can items for long-term storage and travel, allowed our diets to expand from highly localized and seasonal to something a bit more universal.

By the time the 1950s and 1960s rolled

around, the modern concept of a grocery store came into the limelight, taking center stage. We could enjoy fresh strawberries in the dead of winter, tropical fruit in northern climates, and never have to think twice about where our food came from beyond the grocery store shelves. In fact, by the 1990s, it was estimated that food consumed by those in the United States traveled around

1,300 miles on average and changed hands around six times before ever ending up on someone's plate.

Ironically, within a decade or so of grocery stores becoming prominent, the interest in

**'MARKET'**  
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# Growing up on a farm in Cataract, Wisconsin:

## An editor's recollection

By **BENNY MAILMAN**

Editor

When I was nine-years old, my mom and dad moved my siblings and I from the city of Milwaukee to the lush fields of Cataract, Wisconsin. Mom, Bernie Arena, wanted to bring us up in a healthier and safer environment than we were experiencing in the smoggy city, where pollution levels were so high at times that we were not allowed outside to play. Dad, Jim Arena, had come up to the area around a year earlier, to build our log cabin home from a kit, out of Montana. I remember that there was a truckers' strike that year, 1979, and the logs were delayed a bit.

The first time we visited the space that would eventually be our home, it was a stick with a white flag on it, in the middle of one of those lush green fields. Our 50 acres had a barn, grainery, and tiny milk shed, where dad lived during the building years. All of dad's friends that helped him build only wanted to be paid in endless beer and meals. When we ran down to the white flag on a stick, it felt like we were recreating the opening scene to the famous television show, "Little House on the Prairie."

We were kids with cool friends in Milwaukee, so my brother Joe, sister Melanie, and me were not thrilled at all about the move. I remember feeling down and singing "Rhinstone Cowboy" by Glen Campbell, as I walked down 7th Drive, which today is known as Basswood Road. Our mail was Route 4, Sparta Wisconsin, back then and there were party lines for the telephones. We shared a line with four other families, and I remember sneaking a listen every now and again.



**Jim and Bernie Arena lost this barn in the fierce winds that blew through in 1998. Entire forests were laid down, and a dozen other barns in the area went down as well.** Contributed photo.

Us kids had no clue how much our world was going to change because mom and dad had not shared the details of the differences our lives were going to undergo.

### The Big Wake Up Call

Mom had grown up on a dairy farm, close to Pulaski, Wisconsin, so she was familiar with hard work, and had a deep seeded knowledge of growing gardens and taking care of livestock. Our garden was massive, as we were growing all of our food for the year, including winter. Mom took a Master Food Preserver class and learned how to can everything from jams to venison and tomatoes to peaches. How good is she? Today, Thursday, May 1st, 2025, she is

teaching a class at Tomah Health, her second class in a month. April Anderson, our Health Matters contributor from the UW Extension, is assisting my mom. Both classes maxed out for attendance.

### True Punishments Exceeding the Crime

When we told a lie to our parents in the city, punishment came in the form of sitting in the corner or a temporary ban on playing outside. On the farm, the punishments were not so idle. Splitting and stacking wood was always a possibility and being that I was the best stacker of wood, it was often my chore/punishment, or so it seemed.

If you really tried to get one past mom and dad and got caught, then it was one step below death row: cleaning the chicken coop poop. How no one passed out from the vaporizing ammonia that hung in the air like a dense chemical fog of biohazard, I do not know.

### The Garden and Flying Tomatoes

My sister, Melanie, oversaw the onions, around a dozen long rows of weeding for her. My brother Joe was in charge of the tomatoes. This would prove troublesome for me, as he was a bulls-eye thrower in baseball. He would send tomatoes at high velocity, in my direction, rarely missing his number 1 target — me. He would always throw the mushy ones, one time hitting me

in the face, right after I had gotten braces. I was picking tomato bits out my braces for weeks.

I handled eight long rows of potatoes, which meant weeding and hilling. My efforts were strong, and those rows were meticulous until late July. In a way I was quite thankful the Joe was not in charge of the harder-than-most root vegetable.

Mom and dad would also buy lots of corn for us to husk and cut. It took forever, especially for kids who were starting to make new friends and wanted to go shoot hoops with Angel Schuster, in his barn, down the road, or head down to play by the Mill Pond, or go to one of the two taverns and play Ms. Pac Man or Super Pac Man with Mark Johnson, Travis Hampel, and Jim Hemstock.

### Antagonist Chainsaw

In addition to the agricultural side of growing up on a farm, we heated our home with a Jotul wood stove, which was made in Sweden. How strong was that woodstove? It heated our entire home, and mom and dad still use it to this day, to heat their home. What us kids were very unaware of when

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**'GROWING UP'**  
Continued on page 5



# Farm to School Advisory Council nominations due May 15

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) is accepting nominations for the Farm to School Advisory Council until 11:59 p.m. on May 15, 2025.

A seat is available in the at-large category. Members serve three-year terms, and the council meets at least four times per year. Nomination forms and more information are available at <https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/AgDevelopment/FarmToSchool.aspx>. Questions and nomination forms should be sent to DATCP Farm to School and Institution Program, 2811 Agriculture Drive, Madison, WI 53708, or emailed to DATCP Farm to School and Institution Specialist April Yancer at (608) 224-5017 or [april.yancer@wisconsin.gov](mailto:april.yancer@wisconsin.gov).

DATCP Secretary Randy Romanski will appoint the new member, and they may start their term at the summer 2025 Farm to School meeting.

The Farm to School Advisory Council makes key recommendations to the DATCP Secretary that guide the development of farm to school efforts in Wisconsin and provides an annual farm to school report for the Wisconsin legislature.

To include a variety of perspectives on farm to school efforts, the council's 15 members represent the following categories: one DATCP employee appointed by the



DATCP Secretary; one employee of the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) appointed by the DHS Secretary; one employee of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) appointed by the DPI Superintendent; and twelve other members who are farmers, experts in child health, school food service personnel, and other persons with interests in agriculture, nutrition, and education, all appointed by the DATCP Secretary.



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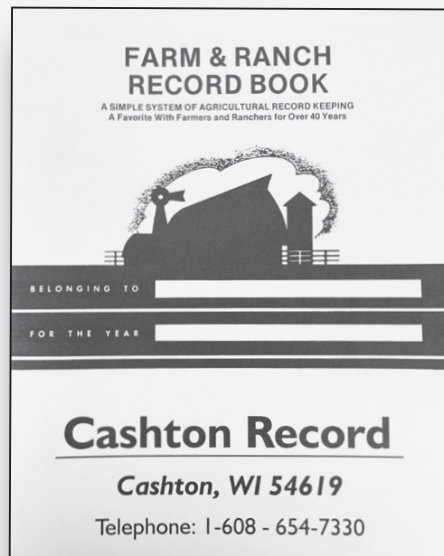
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## 'GROWING UP'

Continued from page 3



**Above: Bernie Arena is seen here by the white flag on a stick, staking the future of where her and husband, Jim Arena, would build their log cabin home. Both had been working at the Milwaukee Journal before deciding to take the leap of faith on the 50 acres. 46 years later, they still call it home.** Contributed photo.



**Left: This Jotul woodstove was made in Sweden and has lasted the Arena's through present day. Benny was left in charge of the stove one night, when Jim and Bernie went out for dinner at Four Corners Supper Club. When they returned, the temperature inside had crept over 80 degrees.** Contributed photo.

we moved to Cataract was that woodstoves require wood. The amount of work coming our way did not appear on our radar until we were trapped in the woods with our parents. There was no way out.

I remember the first tree dad cut down with a chainsaw. I asked him, "Can I yell timber dad?"

He kind of laughed, and said, "OK son." That was the only fun moment I remember having in the whole cutting, splitting, stacking, and hauling wood to the house scenario, for over nine years. I always felt bad when I heard a chainsaw in the distance because I knew some kid was working his or her tail off.

### Worst of the Worst

By far, the worst farming experience growing up on a farm, for me, was when the chickens stopped laying eggs or a feisty rooster was too crazy, and they had to become sustenance, again, by being canned by mom. I won't even get into the running around without a head thing.

For me, the worst part was the defeathering, which began by dunking the chicken in scolding hot water. That smell was enough to make a gorilla wince. Then it was the sheer number of feathers on each chicken, I would guesstimate around 1 million per bird. Then when all of the feathers were off, there was still the singeing of tinier hairs on the rubbery fowl corpse. It was gross and will most likely remain the worst task I have ever been assigned in this lifetime, with cleaning grease traps at Fort McCoy running a close second.

### Winter Posed its Own Toughness

When Fall rolled around and warnings of a first frost hit the airwaves, it was harvest time ... immediately. We had a huge root cellar, and all squashes, onions, tomatoes, beans, and potatoes made their way to that cool and dark space. Mom had purchased a

Garden-Way cart, which allowed for large loads to be carried, expediently clearing the Earth of all the produce that we had tended throughout the summer.

In the winter, since the water would freeze the pipes if we ran it to the barn, we had to fill 5-gallon water jugs, around three of them, and pull them through snow, on a toboggan, like Rocky Balboa in "Rocky IV," in Russia. We also took a tea kettle filled with boiling water. This prevented us kids from smashing the dishes into oblivion, to get the ice out of the rabbit dishes. We simply turned the dish upside down and poured the hot water on the bottom and the block of ice would slip out easily. Needless to say, we were all in really good shape.

### Hindsight is 20/20

It is hard to see the benefits of doing chores and duties that you despise, while you are doing them, in real time. But when I was in Marine Corps bootcamp I was the most physically fit recruit, by far. Joe, Melanie and I rarely, to this day, get sick with coughs or the flu. Looking back on those days elicits laughter among us all, as we discuss what I have told you here.

This window into my life is a window into the hardworking and determined lives of many in Monroe County. We grew up in a generation where a lot was asked and expected of us, prior to adulthood. Our parents set strong examples for us to follow, jumping in to do their part. I wrote both of my parents a long letter, and handed it to them personally, when I got out of the Marines. Each letter thanked them, individually, for the incredible gifts they gave me in my youth, of strong will, determination, and the ability to know that I could conquer anything that lay before me, or at least give it one heck of an effort.



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# Strategies to navigate the agriculture labor shortage

Labor shortages can make it hard for any business owner to compete, and those working in the agricultural sector are no exception to that reality. The U.S. Senate Committee on Aging notes that the median age of farmers in the United States is 58, and more farmers are older than 65 than under 44. That doesn't bode well for the future, but the labor shortages confronting the agricultural sector pose an immediate problem as well.

A January 2025 report from the agricultural tech firm Sabanto noted there are currently 2.4 million unfilled jobs within the agricultural sector. Labor shortages pose a unique challenge, but the following are some strategies agricultural operations can consider to overcome a lack of help.

- **Look for ways to automate.** Automation can be a lifeline that helps to meet the challenge of labor shortages within the agricultural sector. Modern technology enables completion of various tasks, such as water measurement and soil analysis, through the use of automated sensors or programs. Automation can allow farmers to direct their limited personnel resources toward tasks that require hands-on work.



- **Join forces with fellow farmers.** Another potential solution is to pool limited labor resources with other farmers in your area. Farmers can work together to identify workers who can be trained as specialists and then transported to various sites to perform vital tasks each farm needs to survive.
- **Cut down on field operations when possible.** Reducing reliance on tasks that cannot be automated is another strategy to confront the labor shortage. For example,

no-tillage farming methods require fewer personnel. Seasonal farming that limits operations during times of year when the available workforce is particularly scant also can help navigate the labor shortage.

- **Encourage local politicians to promote legislative solutions.** Policy reform that prioritizes access to labor within the agricultural sector can serve both short- and long-term needs. Farmers can contact local politicians and let them know about

the challenges facing the agricultural sector, offering invaluable feedback that can be used to write and promote farmer-friendly legislation.

The agricultural sector faces immediate and long-term labor shortages. Confronting that sizable challenge may require a willingness to embrace new strategies and promote important policy changes in the years ahead.

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SMALL BUSINESS FEATURE

# Q & A

with  
on-the-farm welder

## Hunter Groom of Ruthless Welds

Interview, photos, and layout by  
Logan Everson, Cashton Record Editor

**O**n a clear, sunny Sunday afternoon, Hunter Groom sets up shop in a hay shed south of Liberty Pole.

That day's project is a fixing a back plate that keeps a grabber attached to the tractor's bucket. His diesel-fueled generator loudly purrs as it powers the welding unit to life in Hunter's office for the day.

It's just one of many offices Hunter has had for the past year.

Hunter works full-time as a freelance mobile welder. He started his business Ruthless Welds in June 2024, which has been humming along ever since.

He agreed to be a part of our first small business Q&A session. Here's what he said:

**Q: First of all, why 'Ruthless Welds'?**  
**A: Where's my PR person [his wife, Raina]?** She's way better at answering stuff like that... Why 'Ruthless Welds'? Well, have you ever had something break on you all the time and you just want it to be fixed... the whole idea is fixing it right and fixing it so it never breaks again, so that we never have to come back.

**Q: How long have you been welding?**  
**A: Professionally, on my own, it will be one year this June.** But for the last five years, I worked in a food factory and I did all their fabricating. I took classes in high school [Westby] and college and had on-the-job training, but also kind of grew up with it on the farm.

**Q: So you grew up on a farm?**  
**A: Yep, I grew up on a dairy and beef farm over by Avalanche.** We fixed all of our own stuff so that's kind of where it all started... I learned how to make stuff better than what it was. I understand wanting to just put a band-aid on it to try and get stuff done and keep moving. That's part of the reason

why I wanted to do this, because there's so many farmers out there that need stuff done and can't get to it or they don't have time. They need that help.

**Q: After graduation, why did you decide to go to college instead of staying on the farm?**  
**A: Well, I wanted to get out of the house and try something new and look at kind of what the world had to offer.** I figured

I would be in an industrial setting doing maintenance and messing around with PLCs [programmable logic computers] and robotics and stuff like that... But I wanted something that I could control my own destiny with, something that I felt that I was building for me and my family, but also something I can help the community with.

**Q: What's your favorite thing to weld?**  
**A: My favorite thing to weld is probably stainless steel**

because it's cleaner and it's really pretty when you're done.

**Q: What's your least favorite thing to weld?**  
**A: I don't have one...** No, I really can't think of anything.

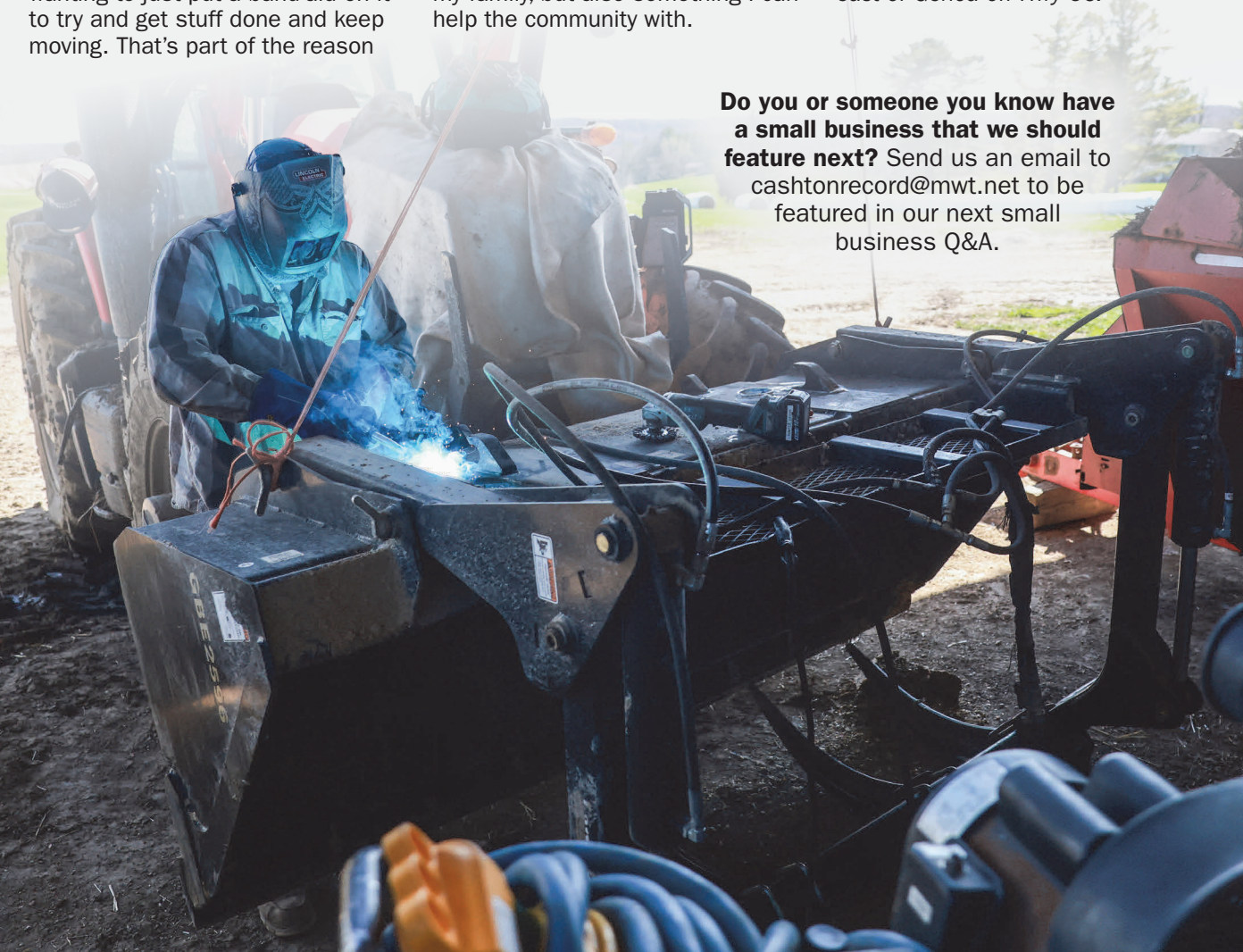
Besides repairing what is broken, Hunter also likes to make custom projects like animal

feeders and ladder racks, just to name a few. Hunter and his equipment will travel anywhere within a 50 mile radius of Viroqua. He can be reached by phone 24/7 at (608) 632-7080 or you can bring projects to him at S5007 County Rd. N, nine miles west of Viroqua, and 12 miles east of Genoa off Hwy 56.

**Do you or someone you know have a small business that we should feature next?** Send us an email to [cashtonrecord@mwt.net](mailto:cashtonrecord@mwt.net) to be featured in our next small business Q&A.



The Man Behind The Mask: Hunter Groom





# THE PLANT GUY: JACOB KIMPEL

By **JENNIFER RODRIGUEZ MORAN**  
Contributing Writer

## From lost in addiction to focused on flora: Sparta man finds peace with plants

Jacob Kimpel of Sparta, Wisconsin, has a story to share with all of us. It is a story of addiction, recovery, hope, healing, and purpose. For the past five years, plants have helped Kimpel maintain sobriety, while deepening his knowledge and experience on his botanical interests. From floor to ceiling, and filling his basement below, a myriad of beautiful, green varieties of living art breathe life and joy into Jacob's home. These days, they are growing so well that he is sharing them with his community, as The Plant Guy.

The Plant Guy explained, "It started out when I was really struggling with alcohol, living with my parents out on 71 and I was told I could start a garden, so I set out to put in a 30' x 25' garden on their front lawn and I found I could spend hours in a garden without thinking about alcohol; it was very peaceful and relaxing." That was five years ago.

Upon entering Kimpel's home, one is struck by the number and variety of plants growing in open space, as well as every

nook and cranny. While there are too many to list, Jacob did his best to name his current favorites. "My favorites are the Monstera Deliciosa, Philodendron Paraiso Verde, and Fire Flash Spider plant. But what I'm most proud of right now is my Alocasia collection, including my Jacklyn and Variegated Frydek!"

To achieve success with tropical house plants, local ferns, and other living gems, during the long Wisconsin winters, Jacob has learned how much light, space, and water each plant variety needs. In addition, he has employed clever modern tech, such as apps, which remind him when to water, and LED grow lights, which save on energy costs associated with running multiple lights.

Kimpel has propelled himself into the deep and vast world of plants. Five years into this journey, he loves discovering new plants and seeking out hard to find varieties. Jacob is self-taught, from internet resources on his smartphone, Youtube, books, nurseries, and garden centers. Kimpel loves sharing what he has learned with friends and community members.

Jacob Kimpel is living and breathing proof that harmful addictions can be replaced with healthy habits, such as houseplants and gardening. To learn more and see what The Plant Guy is growing, search for The Plant Guy on Facebook Marketplace.



Jacob Kimpel's basement, living room, and bedroom - all alive with beautiful plants! Known as "The Plant Guy," Kimpel has gone from lost in addiction to focused on flora. Photo contributed by Jenny Rodriguez Moran



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# Highly pathogenic avian influenza confirmed in Sheboygan County

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, TRADE, AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

Press Release



The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) has identified a case of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI H5N1) in a commercial poultry flock, in Sheboygan County. DATCP and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) animal health officials are working together in a joint incident response. The affected premises has been quarantined to restrict movement of poultry and poultry products. Birds on the property will be depopulated, to prevent the spread of the disease. Birds from the flock will not enter the food system.

The H5N1 HPAI virus has continued to circulate in both wild and domestic birds in North America, since December 2021. H5N1 HPAI viruses are highly contagious and often fatal to domestic poultry. Caused by influenza type A viruses, the disease varies in severity, depending on the strain

and species affected. The disease can be spread by contact with infected birds, commingling with wild birds or their droppings, equipment, or clothing worn by anyone working with the animals.

DATCP continues to urge all livestock owners to implement strong biosecurity measures, to protect their flocks and herds from the disease. This includes washing hands, disinfecting equipment, restricting access to animals, and separating new additions to the flock or herd, for at least 30 days. Poultry owners are asked, when possible, to keep their birds indoors.

When HPAI H5N1 is diagnosed in a Wisconsin poultry flock, a control area is established within a 10-kilometer area around the infected premises, restricting movement, on or off any premises with poultry. To help producers determine if their poultry are located within an active control

area or surveillance zone, poultry owners are encouraged to use DATCP's mapping tool.

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) and Sheboygan County Public Health are monitoring exposed farm workers for HPAI symptoms. The risk to the general public in Wisconsin remains low. Prevention information for farmworkers or others who have close contact with birds, dairy cows, or other relevant animals, can be found under Protective Actions for People. Farm workers, businesses, and processors can request personal protective equipment (PPE) through the DHS emergency stockpile: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/preparedness/medical-stockpile.htm>.

DATCP reminds Wisconsin livestock owners to register their premises. State law requires that all livestock owners register where their animals are kept. Registration helps animal health officials communicate with flock and herd owners during disease outbreaks.

To report increased mortality or signs of illness among domestic birds, dairy cattle, or other animals, contact DATCP at (608) 224-4872 (business hours) or (800) 943-0003 (after hours and weekends). For updates on how the virus is affecting domestic birds in Wisconsin, and to find

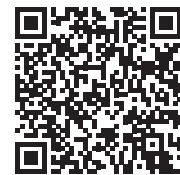
resources on protecting Wisconsin poultry, visit DATCP's HPAI in Poultry webpage: [https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs\\_Services/HPAIWisconsin.aspx](https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/HPAIWisconsin.aspx).

## H5N1 in Other Species

The HPAI H5N1 virus has continued to circulate in both wild and domestic birds in North America since December 2021. Since that time, the H5N1 virus has also affected other species, including mammalian species. A specific genotype of H5N1 virus was first detected in dairy cattle earlier this year, in Texas. To date, Wisconsin has not identified an H5N1 infection in dairy herds in the state. DATCP continues to work with USDA to conduct testing for H5N1, encourage biosecurity, and provide resources to producers.

For updates on how the H5N1 virus is affecting dairy cattle across the country, and to find resources on protecting Wisconsin dairy cattle, visit DATCP's H5N1 in Dairy Cattle webpage:

[https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs\\_Services/AvianInfluenzaCattle.aspx](https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/AvianInfluenzaCattle.aspx) or use the the QR code below.



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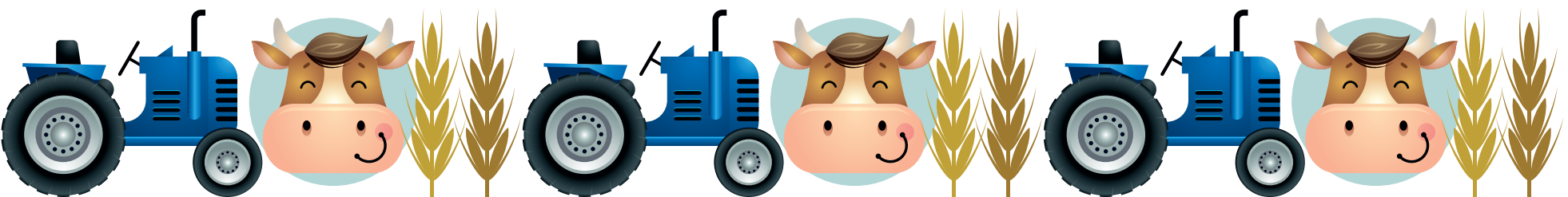
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## 'MARKET'

Continued from page 2

farmers' markets also began to renew. In the 1970s, farmers' markets became increasingly popular for communities, skyrocketing in some areas over the course of a couple of decades.

Today, this interest in farmers' markets continues. Hillsboro's newly formed Chamber of Commerce made establishing a local farmers' market one of their first priorities back in 2023, and the market has been a success ever since. This year, the Hillsboro Farmers' Market will be opening for the season on Saturday, June 7, and will continue every first and third Saturday of the month through September. The Hillsboro market will open at 8:00A.M. on market days and remain open until 12:30P.M., so be sure to stop on by and check out everything they have to offer this year! You can find the market at 1056 Crest Avenue—or just keep an eye out for the signs!

This year, Wonevok will also be tossing their hat into the farmers' market ring. Elroy resident Angie Cain approached the Village of Wonevok with plans to establish a farmers' market in Wonevok, taking advantage of recent upgrades to the village's 400 Trail rest area. Cain, a chef by trade, has been taking classes on hosting and managing farmers' markets, and would like to see a farmers' market in every community some day.

Wonevok's new farmers' market, named Tutti Noi in honor of Cain's Italian heritage, aims to offer a wide variety of goods—from your standard fruits, veggies, and other food products to items from local craftspeople. Tutti Noi Farmers Market will also be able to accept state and federal nutrition assistance programs, such as WIC, SNAP, and senior vouchers.

Tutti Noi Farmers' Market will be opening for their inaugural season on Saturday, May 10, and kicking things off with a Grand



Those looking to grow their gardens may be able to find some potted plants to purchase at their local farmers' market.

Photo taken by Nicolette Nauman, HSE Editor.

Opening Garden Party. There will be free admission to this event, and the party is set to begin at 9:00A.M. and continue until 2:00P.M.

There are plenty of other events planned for Wonevok's new farmers' market this season, so you may want to check out their Facebook page! You can find them on Facebook at Tutti Noi Farmers Market. One such upcoming event is a Mental Health Awareness Day, scheduled for Saturday, May 17, when local mental health experts

and organizations will be invited into the market to help those who attend learn more about mental health services in the area.

The Tutti Noi Farmers' Market will be operating on a weekly basis, so be sure to carve out some time each Saturday between May 10 and October 25 to head on over to the 400 State Trail rest area in Wonevok to see what this new market has to offer!

The market will open each Saturday at 9:00A.M., rain or shine, and will remain open until 2:00P.M.

Take some time this summer season to check out some of your local farmers' markets; you'll be tapping into an ancient tradition and helping support small businesses and local producers at the same time!



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