Hello, Harford County!

As we buckle down finishing the harvest and preparing for another cold winter, I take solace in knowing that the holidays are just around the corner. At the end of this month, my family – and I hope yours, too – will be gathered around the table and enjoying a decadent meal in celebration of Thanksgiving.

Every child in school learns the story of the first Thanksgiving from which our modern holiday was born. But it’s less common knowledge that Thanksgiving has been a permanent national holiday for less than the last 100 years.

Setting aside time to give thanks is an old tradition, and many celebrations of thanksgiving were held in America even before the Mayflower arrived. Even so, the first American Thanksgiving is typically attributed to the Pilgrims and Native Americans in 1621. Celebrations of thanksgiving were relatively common thereafter but were not an annual event. Days of thanksgiving were declared occasionally, on a local scale and in response to specific events, such as the end of a drought. The New England Puritans observed these thanksgivings as religious holidays with prayer and sometimes fasting. Even through the eighteenth-century, thanksgiving days were observed like a Sabbath during the week. As the religious culture of the American people evolved, these days of thanksgiving eventually became more focused around family and feasting.

The first national thanksgiving was proclaimed by the Continental Congress in December of 1777 in response to a battle victory during the Revolutionary War. It was a somber celebration, and the proclamation recommended “that servile labor, and such recreation as though at other times innocent, may be unbecoming of this appointment, [and should] be omitted on so solemn an occasion.” After 1777, days of national thanksgiving were issued annually by Presidents Washington, Adams, and Monroe but only through 1815. After 1815, days of thanksgiving were still celebrated but on a state-by-state basis.

There was a feeling among many Americans, however, that Thanksgiving should be a national celebration. Sarah Josepha Hale, the editor of a popular women’s magazine, made a strong argument for this case and influenced President Abraham Lincoln to proclaim a national Thanksgiving Day. In 1863, Lincoln declared two national thanksgivings: August 6 celebration of the victory at Gettysburg, and another

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The goal of the American Sheep Industry Association (ASI) and the U.S. sheep industry is to eradicate scrapie from US borders by 2017. In addition, it is the objective to have the United States recognized as scrapie-free in accordance with the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE).

The 2017 goal is still attainable, but “detecting the last cases of scrapie is always the most difficult and most costly,” according to APHIS Veterinary Services. The agency is considering the proposition of a “negligible” scrapie-risk category which may be included in a future draft of the OIE scrapie chapter. A negligible risk category has opened up many markets for the beef industry.

For fiscal year 2013, 35,282 sheep were tested for scrapie. The prevalence of scrapie was determined to be less than 0.03 percent, a decline of 90 percent since slaughter surveillance began in 2003. In 2003, scrapie prevalence in sheep was 0.2 percent. Since April 2003, 425,890 samples have been collected, with 473 confirmed positives for scrapie. Most cases of scrapie have been found in black and mottled-faced sheep. The incidence of scrapie has been highest in the Midwestern states.

In fiscal year 2013, APHIS tested 7,563 goats. Since slaughter surveillance began in 2003, roughly 19,000 goats have been tested, without finding any positive animals. However a few positive goats have been found through testing clinical goats and in goats in infected sheep flocks. The prevalence of scrapie, while not zero, is likely lower than 0.02 percent in goats. Producers can help to find the final cases of scrapie by having mature animals (culls and deads) tested for the disease. APHIS provides shipping boxes and labels for the submission of mature heads for scrapie testing. There is no cost. Many veterinary diagnostic laboratories also accept heads for scrapie testing.

Source: American Sheep Industry Association

Scrapie: Eradicate It

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Source: American Sheep Industry Association

While Lincoln reestablished a national thanksgiving, he did not make it a fixed annual holiday; presidents still had to declare a national thanksgiving each year. Thanksgiving was customarily proclaimed on the last Thursday in November, per Lincoln’s model. However, in 1939, President Franklin D. Roosevelt proclaimed Thanksgiving on the next-to-last Thursday in November. (That year, November had five Thursdays instead of four, which is the more common occurrence.) This move was met with much resistance from the American people as it broke from tradition. To resolve the dispute, Congress passed a resolution requiring Thanksgiving to be observed on the fourth Thursday of November, thus making Thanksgiving into an official federal holiday.

Today Thanksgiving is steeped in the traditions of feasting, family, and football, but it’s still also a time when people reflect on and give thanks for the blessings around them. I wish you and your family a happy holiday.

Sincerely,

Source: American Sheep Industry Association
Community Supported Agriculture – or CSA – is a growing trend that allows consumers to buy fresh, locally grown produce directly from farms in their own communities. Now, the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources (AGNR) will be looking at ways to help farmers interested in starting CSAs to be more effective, while protecting consumers at the same time.

The College of AGNR is partnering with the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA), the Maryland Farm Bureau, and the Maryland Agriculture Law Education Initiative to develop contractual agreements for farmers using CSAs. The project recently received $35,610 in grant funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Agricultural Marketing Service.

“The main problem has been MDA gets calls each year from subscribers (customers to a CSA) because a farmer has failed to deliver or there is a drought and the farmer has nothing to deliver over the season,” said Paul Goeringer, a legal specialist for the University of Maryland Extension and the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics (AREC).

“Using a CSA model opens up another market for (farmers), but they need to do research before getting involved to make sure they have production to cover an additional market,” Goeringer said.

The awarded funds will be used to study pre-existing CSA contracts by contacting CSA operators and attorneys in the Maryland State Bar Association’s Agricultural Law Section and the American Agricultural Law Association. Once obtained, the CSA contracts will be analyzed and assessed to help with the development of a CSA Contracting Guide complete with a model CSA contract. Three farmer-consumer workshops will also be conducted and open to the public. The project’s anticipated finish is September 30, 2015.

“The end result would be to make consumers aware of the risks that go into CSAs and help farmers entering the model understand how to handle potential risks: drought, crop failure, etc.,” Goeringer said.

The 2012 Census of Agriculture identified 119 Maryland farms using a CSA business model. The Maryland Farm Bureau and the MDA will help the College of AGNR get materials into the hands of more farmers and educate consumers about how CSA contracts should work.

Jim Hanson, Ph.D., a professor in the AREC department and an Extension specialist interested in local food systems, will also be involved with the project. Ashley Newhall, a legal specialist with a background in agriculture and food law, and Mayhah Suri, a senior majoring in Environmental Science and Policy, are also part of the team.

“I think [CSAs] are an option for farmers to utilize as they continue to feed an expanding world,” Goeringer concluded. “This will help consumers connect more with farmers and understand what goes into running a farm.”
Blood is pumped from the heart through arteries to the hoof and is assisted in its return through a “pumping mechanism” in the hoof. This mechanism is necessary due to the position of the hoof in relation to the heart. There are no muscles in the lower leg or hoof to aid in the return of venous blood to the heart. Thus, the hoof has to pump venous blood back to the heart. An extensive network of veins called a venous plexus are located on both sides of each of the lateral cartilages and in the sensitive structures of the hoof. The compression of these veins by the plantar cushion against the lateral cartilages or the coffin bone against the hoof acts as a “pump” to force the blood up the leg and back to the heart. Blood is prevented from returning to the hoof by one-way valves in the veins of the leg. Compression of the plexuses also acts as a valve to contain blood in the vessels of the hoof below the plexuses. This produces a “hydraulic cushion” that further dissipates concussion and protects the fragile coffin bone. This valve action also creates a fluid pressure that, when the hoof is raised and the compressed veins are open, causes the blood to exit up the leg and the plexuses to fill. Each time the foot bears weight, the veins are compressed. Each time the foot is raised, the veins open, and blood is pushed in by the arterial pulse and gravity. The weight of the horse forces the blood back up the leg, which is commonly referred to as the second heart.
Fall Soil Sampling and Lime

It’s hard to believe that fall has arrived and it’s time for soil sampling and possibly time to lime.

No, I haven’t done my soil sampling yet nor my dad’s (as promised). But I want to do it soon because I am always excited to see the results. I am guessing that lime will be needed this fall, that we’ll need a cover to increase organic matter, and that soil fertility is down. Still, I can’t wait to get soil samples and see if I am right. Nothing will be done until the soil sample results are here because all decisions will be based on that report. Yes, it is that important!

Lime is my biggest concern. Lime is so important because it adjusts the soil acidity or alkalinity. The soil pH affects the availability of nutrients to the plants, and the ideal pH is based on the desired crop. Most agronomic crops grow best in slightly acidic soil with pH between 6.0 and 6.5. Alfalfa likes soil pH to be between 6.6 and 7.0. However, potato and sweet potato yields are best at a pH of 5.2.

Did you know that the soil pH level may also regulate the breakdown of herbicides? Certain herbicides do not break down in the soil if the pH is too high or too low. However, when the pH is right, they will breakdown and become active. This is yet another reason to monitor pH closely.

There are a number of liming materials used to neutralize acids in soils. Liming materials usually contain oxides or carbonates of calcium and magnesium. It is the oxide, hydroxide, or carbonate contained in the liming material that acts to neutralize soil acidity. Different liming materials have different acid-neutralizing capabilities. Most folks use calcite limestone, which contains calcium carbonate, or dolomitic limestone, which contains both calcium and magnesium.

Liming materials are most effective when they are thoroughly incorporated and mixed with the soil at a depth of eight inches. When lime is applied without mixing – as in a no-till situation, a pasture, or hay ground – liming is still effective, but the application should never exceed 1,500 pounds oxides per acre.

Fall lime application is popular because it allows reaction time correcting soil pH before the next growing season. I plan on getting my soil analyzed soon so I can lime this fall and be better prepared for spring 2015.

There is a lot to consider when planning a lime application. Fortunately, the University has two publications to fully explain and assist you with these decisions. They are “Soil Fertility Management” (SFM-5, May 1997) and “Nutrient Manager; Focus on pH and Lime” (Volume 3, Issue 2, fall 1996). Copies are available at the office or online at extension.umd.edu/anmp/ph-and-lime.

Pick one of our beautiful, brisk fall days to enjoy gathering your soil samples. Perhaps you can guess what the results will be. You may be able to get pretty close by evaluating the growth, color, density, and vigor of the crop currently in the field. In just a week or two you will receive the lab results and be able to compare it to your expectations.

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Don’t forget we offer Fall Soil Nitrate Testing (FSNT) for anyone who plans on a fall nitrogen or manure application on winter wheat and barley grain. Call the office for availability.
The term “sodbusting” is used to identify the preparation of erosion-prone lands for use as cropland. Sodbuster violations are unauthorized practices on highly erodible lands that converted native vegetation such as rangeland or woodland to crop production after December 23, 1985. Farmers should be aware that if they use highly erodible land for crop production without proper conservation measures, they risk losing eligibility to participate in Farm Service Agency (FSA) programs. Before producers clear, plow, or otherwise prepare areas not presently under crop production, they are required to file for a Highly Erodible Land (HEL) and Wetland Certification through FSA, indicating the area to be brought into production. If Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) indicates on the determination form that the area will be highly erodible land, the producer will be required to develop and implement a conservation plan on the affected acreage before bringing land into production. Always review the Conservation Plan with NRCS or Soil Conservation District staff prior to purchasing or renting cropland acres to ensure the acreage meets Conservation Compliance rules. Never remove trees along or in a natural drainage without consulting NRCS personnel. Please realize that conversion of existing woodland to crop production is considered sodbusting. For more information on sodbusting procedures, please contact the Harford Ag Service Center at 410-838-6181 x3.

Access and Control of Digital Accounts at Death

By Paul Goeringer, Agriculture Law Specialist, University of MD Extension
Reprinted from the Maryland Risk Management Blog

Today, I’ve decided to talk to you about a sad subject: what happens to your digital accounts after your death. I often like to point out in estate planning presentations that Ben Franklin, Scarlett O’Hara, and Daniel Defoe (not the actor but the writer) have all stated in some fashion, “the only thing certain in life are death and taxes.” So because it is inevitable that death will happen to each of us, let’s take a moment to consider an issue that will only grow in importance in the years to come. Who controls your digital accounts upon your death? As more and more of us move our lives to social media accounts, email, and storing data on the cloud, this will become a vital issue in your estate planning process.

As you’ve probably guessed, the answer is not always clear. In a majority of states including Maryland, privacy laws, anti-hacking laws, and the digital service’s own terms of usage will often preclude your executor from gaining access to your digital accounts. You could list your passwords in your will (or in a notebook near the computer), but this will not solve the problem because again the same laws listed above still do not give your executor legal control of your digital accounts. In many cases, your estate’s executor will need to go to court and get a court order. This can create additional hassles that your loved ones probably do not want to deal with when settling your affairs.

State legislatures are beginning to wake up to this growing issue and are passing laws to allow for an executor to gain control of a deceased person’s digital accounts. Virginia has passed such a law, allowing executors the right to request access to the deceased’s digital accounts. Delaware’s General Assembly has
recently passed such a bill, now waiting on the governor’s signature. The Maryland General Assembly has considered such legislation in the past, but as of writing this post, nothing has been enacted. Currently, the Uniform Law Commission, a body of members appointed by each state to help develop uniform state laws, is drafting a uniform law granting access to executors.

So why as an agricultural producer should you be worried about this? I’m guessing many of you already have email accounts and are utilizing your email as a filing cabinet much like I do with my work email account. You potentially have important business records stored in those email accounts that your executor may need to access to continue on the farming operation. At the same time, producers are poised to store more and more yield, input, and production data on digital cloud accounts with companies such as John Deere and Monsanto. We will avoid today the bigger issue of data ownership (do you own that data, does the data company, or do you both have some joint ownership rights?), but the ability to access that information will be important. Having laws in place to facilitate your executor and heirs’ ability to access this important data to keep the farm running is only going to grow in importance over the coming years.

Those of you utilizing a business organization structure, such as an LLC or corporate structure, may have a leg up until Maryland fixes this hole in the law. Setting up digital accounts in the name of the company would allow the successor to fully access the accounts upon your death. This would allow the child who plans to take over the farm to have full access to the farm’s digital accounts with fewer hassles. This is possible because the idea with a business organization is it can be continued on after the death of the owner, while a sole proprietorship (the business form used by 83% of all MD farms) ends at the death of the owner. You may want to discuss with your accountant and attorney the benefits which come with utilizing a business organizational structure besides just the potential to ease transfer of digital assets at death. This is potentially one fix in Maryland until the General Assembly changes the existing laws to allow for executor access to digital records.

This article does not substitute for legal advice.

LEAD Maryland Symposium: “Ag Evolution, Food Revolution”

Bryan Voltaggio, a native of Frederick – owner of six restaurants and the first chef to compete on both Top Chef and Top Chef Masters – will be the keynote speaker at the LEAD Maryland Foundation’s Class VIII Symposium “Image of Agriculture: Ag Evolution, Food Revolution,” scheduled for Wednesday, December 3, at Turf Valley Resort and Conference Center in, Ellicott City. The Image of Ag Symposium is an all-day event with breakout sessions in addition to Chef Voltaggio’s presentation. The goal of the symposium is to reach out to consumers and groups who are interested in where their food comes from and present the story of the totality of Maryland agriculture. Topics covered include an overview of food production in Maryland; benefits and ways to buy/source locally; organic and conventional farming; defining food labels; and technology used in faring today. Tickets for the event are $45 per person and include a lunch made with locally grown foods. For more information and to purchase tickets, please go to www.imageofagriculture.eventbrite.com and follow on Facebook at ‘The Image of Agriculture Symposium’ and on Twitter @ImageofAg. For questions about the event please contact lead8symposium@gmail.com.

December 3, 2014
Turf Valley Resort and Conference Center
Ellicott City, MD

Great resources are just a click away!

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