



# Kentucky Cooperator

Volume 8, Issue 1

## Four Hills Farm & The New American Lamb

Winter 2010

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KCARD

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When Jim Mansfield first purchased his farm in Mercer County in the late 1990's he originally turned to beef cattle to take advantage of his forage acres.

"We quickly realized that on our small farm, beef cattle weren't making any money," explained Mansfield. "That is when I began looking at sheep as a more intensive alternative."

Mansfield knew that he wanted to raise sheep for meat, and in his research discovered the Katahdin breed. Mansfield began his transition away from cattle to sheep in 2003. He admits he spent the first few years building fences, trying to get his numbers up, and just learning about the care for sheep.

"Kathadin are a smaller breed and I

learned quickly that they are very hardy, thrifty, easy to care for, and most importantly, they produce great quality meat," explained Mansfield. "The lamb is known for tenderness and a mild flavor. I tested this out when I processed one of my three year old rams. The meat was great, not gamey, not strong like one would expect for an animal of that age."

During the transition to sheep production, Mansfield also began to develop his plan for adding value to his sheep.

### *New American Lamb*

"I decided I didn't want to direct market the meat, I wanted to go wholesale or direct to a retailer and sell that way," said Mansfield. "I knew I wanted to spend my time farming, not traveling



*Jim Mansfield sees a future with the New American Lamb.*

to restaurants and direct marketing my product."

About two years ago, Mansfield got in with a national grocery chain and that relationship has grown to where he now has a market for about 1000 lambs a year. He works with Bluegrass Lamb and Goat in Garrard County to get the lambs processed, and then a food distributor picks up the processed meat and takes it to the grocery stores in Kentucky and Tennessee.

"We recently signed an agreement with Bluegrass Lamb and Goat to work together to develop new mar-

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### Save the Date

KCARD Spring Board Meeting

April 29, 2010

## KCARD Can Help

Winter 2010

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KCARD

**K** CARD is dedicated to facilitating the development and growth of agricultural and rural business throughout our state.

We have an experienced and professional staff to help analyze the business idea, to help structure and incorporate the business and to assist with capitalizing, management, marketing, accounting and legal concerns.

Over 70% of the agribusinesses that KCARD has worked with since 2002 are still in business today and many of them have experienced significant growth. Besides earning income for the business, themselves and their families they employ many local Kentucky people.

KCARD can provide its services not only to new and emerging agribusinesses but to established businesses that wish to improve or expand their current business.

KCARD could not provide these needed services without the strong support of its Board of Directors composed of key agricultural leaders, the support of numerous staff members of key agricultural organizations and institutions that cooperate and collaborate with us daily.

KCARD could not operate without the financial support provided by USDA Rural Business Services and the Agricultural Development Funds provided by the Kentucky Agricultural Development Board.

We owe any success that KCARD has had in working to grow and improve our state's rural economy to these individuals and agricultural partners. They deserve the credit for any accomplishments, success that KCARD has had in developing successful, sustainable agribusiness across our state.

If you need help with your existing business or if you have a potentially good idea for a new business let us hear from you. KCARD exists to help you establish and operate a successful agribusiness in your community.

## UK, KSU Beginning Farmer Training

**B** acked by a nearly \$750,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Kentucky Cooperative Extension will offer a comprehensive training program for beginning farmers and those who are thinking about taking up farming.

The Kentucky's whole farm management education program, A Common Field, is a two-year course offered in 20 areas of the state. It will include face-to-face educational meetings at county extension offices, on-farm dem-

onstrations and, in the second year, a mentor program that will connect beginning farmers with experienced producers. Program organizers are also developing an Internet-based version.

The commonwealth's two land grant institutions, the University of Kentucky and Kentucky State University, are partnering in the program. Joining them in the project are Kentucky Women in Agriculture and the Kentucky Beef Network.

In the first year, the course will

cover topics such as enterprise evaluation, land-labor resources, nutrient management, farm record keeping, agriculture water quality plans and marketing plans, among others.

During the second year, organizers will connect program participants with mentor farmers who have similar enterprise interests. During this phase, beginning farmers will take the material they learned in the classroom and, with the help of their mentors, put it into practice on their own farms.

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## Four Hills Farm *cont...*

kets for hair sheep lamb,” said Mansfield. “The lamb will be promoted with the phrase ‘New American Lamb’ which sounds so much better than hair sheep.”

New American Lamb will be used to identify lamb from Katahdin and Katahdin cross sheep, which are raised with a forage based diet, on pasture with no antibiotics ever. The meat is gourmet quality, very tender and has a wonderful mild flavor that is excellent with or without spices.

“The meat is sold under the Four Hills Farm label. I am working with fifteen other farms now to meet the demand for lamb,” said Mansfield. “I do all the farm visits and marketing, which keeps me busy.”

### *Expanding the Market*

Mansfield admits that he is looking at additional markets beyond Four Hill Farm’s current contract. “If a retailer wants a fresh quality product why should they have to buy it out of California or have it shipped from New Zealand?” asked Mansfield. “We’ve got an animal that does well on Kentucky farms and a market for a home grown product that is fresh.”

In working to build his business Mansfield began meeting with KCARD.

“I knew what KCARD did and decided to reach out to them for assistance,” said Mansfield. I needed someone to help me logically think through what I was developing,”

Mansfield has been working with KCARD for almost a year on financial and business analysis. He believes that having that third party assistance has been helpful for him in identifying the good points and the bad points of his project and looking at ways to make the numbers work.

If the market demand continues to grow, Mansfield is planning to not only expand production of his own operation, but to contract with additional sheep farmers in the state to provide more quality product.

“As the market grows, Four Hills Farm will be able to offer the producer a fixed price with a written agreement, two of the things I would have loved to have had when I began this venture,” said Mansfield. “I think the demand for fresh lamb has always been there, but we didn’t have a dedicated processor like Bluegrass Lamb & Goat to help us supply products year round. Also, the changing demographics in the US have expanded the potential lamb customer base. We lamb producers do have a growing market for the product.”

If you would like to learn more about Four Hills Farm, contact Jim Mansfield at 859-865-4962 or [fourhillsfarm@earthlink.net](mailto:fourhillsfarm@earthlink.net).

*Katahdin  
Sheep at  
Four Hills  
Farm*



## KY Proud at Alltech FEI Games

Applications are now available for Kentucky Proud products to be considered for resale at the Kentucky Artisan Center at Berea.

Products selected during the review sessions will be eligible to be selected for sale at the Kentucky Experience’s Kentucky Proud Product Pavilion during the 2010 Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games.

Applications deadlines for all product types:  
March 31, 2010 for review in April 2010.  
June 30, 2010 for review in July 2010.

To submit Kentucky Proud product(s) for review, complete the appropriate application at <http://agweg.ky.gov>.

If you have questions concerning the application process, contact Victoria Faoro with the Center at (859) 985-5448, ext 222 or [victoria.faoro@ky.gov](mailto:victoria.faoro@ky.gov). If you are not a Kentucky Proud member and would like to become one, please visit [www.kentuckyproud.com](http://www.kentuckyproud.com) for an application.

## On-site Business Consultations

**K**CARD has a philosophy of providing continued hands-on assistance to our clients. The assistance doesn't stop with one project, KCARD wants to remain involved throughout the life of the business.

KCARD staff routinely makes visits to the locations of our clients to discuss current operations and key issues for the business. In providing any of its services to its clients, KCARD finds it very important to spend time at the business location of the client to ensure that KCARD understands the business operations and its needs as well as possible.

As a result of KCARD's philosophy, one of the unique support services offered by KCARD is On-Site Business Consultations.

These on-site consultations include:

- Informal meeting between KCARD staff and manager/owner of business to follow-up on recent business activity and previously identified issues;
- Planned meeting with multiple representatives of the business and KCARD staff persons to plan business activities, discuss a specific issue within the business, or facilitate open dialogue on business operations; and

- ASAP meeting with KCARD staff and manager/owner of the business to address urgent issue within the business or discuss new opportunities for the business.

Examples of on-site consultations with clients include:

- KCARD staff meeting with Carl and Debra Chaney of Chaney's Dairy Barn to help them plan out and act on an opportunity to bottle and market milk produced on their farm;
- KCARD meeting with the management and staff of Lake Cumberland Milling to discuss how to address market changes and to communicate these resulting issues with its owners; and
- KCARD staff following-up with Evans Orchard on the impact of implementing changes based upon recommendations from the BMOA report and how to implement other recommendations made in the BMOA report.

On-site consultation with clients allows KCARD staff to remain engaged in the business and understand their needs and opportunities better.

"Continuing to meet with our clients on-site allows us to remain involved in the business



*KCARD provided on-site consultation to help Evans Orchard improve events at the market.*

and to see if changes based upon recommendations are impacting the business," said Larry Snell, KCARD Executive Director. "We do not want our work with a client to end when we have finished our initial service to them, but we want that to just be the beginning of a long relationship where they can feel free to contact us to discuss or help with anything."

KCARD clients have also expressed a great appreciation for the on-site consultations.

"KCARD has been a great resource for us to discuss new ideas and opportunities," stated Carl Chaney, owner of Chaney's Dairy Barn. "They have been great to help us think through issues, analyze the numbers, and highlight details and issues that we need to be aware of."



*Contact KCARD today for your business consultation or learn more by visiting [www.kcard.info](http://www.kcard.info)*

## KCARD Board

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## Board Member Spotlight

# Roger Thomas

**R**oger Thomas grew up on his family's farm in Smith's Grove in Warren County, and is proud of his agricultural heritage.

"My father and I farmed in a partnership for many years, actually up until 1995," said Thomas. "We had a small dairy about 120 cows and I was very active on the farm up until my election into the state house of representatives in 1996. That was my first role in politics."

While serving as a state legislator Thomas was one of the sponsors of historic House Bill 611 which established the Agriculture Development Fund. Today, Thomas has come full circle and works to oversee the fund he helped to establish in his current role as the Executive Director of the Governor's Office of Agriculture Policy.

"It was amazing watching the implementation of the Ag Development Fund and the tremendous work of extension agents and ag leaders throughout the state helping with the effort," said Thomas. "Now I have the honor

of working with the program daily, and it is exciting to see the benefits of it (the fund) on the farm community."



KCARD is one of the organizations that Thomas believes epitomizes what the Ag Development Fund was established to do ten years ago, help farmers diversify. He admits that KCARD is a great resource for the GOAP staff when they are working with applications and trying to determine the feasibility of a project.

"KCARD provide an invaluable service to the clientele they work with in helping in developing business plans, helping to determine if projects are feasible, and basically helping folks start out on the right foot," said Thomas. "We are lucky in Kentucky to have such a wonderful resource for our entrepreneurs as they work to diversity their farming operations."

## Beginning Farmer *cont...*

The comprehensive online curriculum will live on well past the face-to-face part of the program. It will give access to farmers who don't have the program in their counties and will be used to support and supplement the training of those in the traditional program.

A Common Field will be offered beginning in early 2010. Organizers

have not determined the 20 areas yet, but will choose them based on farmer interest. Beginning farmers -- defined by the USDA as those who have been farming for 10 years or less.

For more information about the program or to express an interest in enrolling, contact the local Kentucky Cooperative Extension office in your county.

*Kentucky Center for Agriculture and Rural Development fosters business success and growth by developing and delivering technical assistance and by providing educational opportunities for agricultural and rural businesses seeking to enhance their economic opportunities.*



### KCARD Staff

Larry Snell, Executive Director  
Brent Lackey, Business Development Specialist  
Nathan Routt, Business Development Specialist  
Rich Laing, Business Development Specialist  
Thelma Davis, Staff Assistant

To learn more about KCARD visit our web site at [www.kcard.info](http://www.kcard.info)

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KY Center for Agriculture & Rural Development  
411 Ring Road  
Elizabethtown, KY 42701