



Erin Parisien looks over her herd of Black Angus beef cattle at Aroostook Beef Co. with some help from one of her chickens.

## Beef

Continued from Page C1

The Aroostook Beef Co.'s cattle being sold for meat were born and raised on the New Canada farm. They are fed only local hay and grain, Parisien said, and are not given growth hormones or antibiotics.

For now, Aroostook Beef is sold locally, directly from the farm and at area farmers markets.

"It's been a bit of a struggle to get people to realize local beef is going to be superior to what they get at a grocery store with commercial beef, but they are begin-

ning to figure that out," she said.

This season, Parisien and Nielsen are offering beef CSAs, allowing people to pre-purchase a set amount of beef by the month.

For Parisien, the entire cattle process has been a learning experience.

"You have to start somewhere. For us it was buying the land, build[ing] storage for food and equipment and then buy[ing our] first cows and bull," she said. "Nine months later you have a calf and — if you are lucky — 16 months after that you have something to sell."

She also had to learn how to run the various tractors and implements needed to

manage the land.

"When anything on the equipment would go wrong, right away I'd call Rich," she said with a laugh. "Now, with some of the minor breakdowns I can figure it out. But there is still stuff that goes really wrong [and] repairs of that are beyond my paygrade."

Parisien also finds the science behind what makes a good meat producer fascinating.

"I'll spend a lot of time researching the DNA and genetics of different cows and bulls," she said. "I want to track down what I feel is that perfect animal."

Using that knowledge, Parisien said she and Nielsen

purchased their first cows and bulls from western states, including Montana and the Dakotas. The cattle being sold for meat are the Maine-born offspring of those animals.

So far, the couple is pleased with how their herd and life in Maine is shaping up, and Parisien said it was worth the toss of the dice.

"When I play poker there is so much more going on than just what cards you have or what meets the eye," she said. "With my cattle, I find there is so much more going on with them than meets the eye; you just have to play your cards and go with it."

## Eggs

Continued from Page C1

recent allegations directly, but wrote, "FDA's enforcement of the egg rule is ongoing and a return visit to the Hillandale facility is planned."

There was no indication when that visit may take place, and calls to Sheehan and the FDA were not returned.

Meanwhile, Shapiro this week said he is less than pleased Hillandale is not moving to cage-free in Turner.

"The Maine facility we investigated was rife with filth and animal cruelty," he said. "The very first thing the operators should be doing is planning their conversions to a higher welfare, better food safety [and] cage-free system."

That's not going to happen anytime soon, according to Wilt.

"'Cage-free' means construction of new buildings," she said. "The barns that are there now were built for caged birds and it would be a big undertaking to transform them into cage-free housing [and] that is not likely."

She also stressed any move Hillandale is making to go cage-free elsewhere was in no way prompted by the HSUS video.

"Those plans were already underway," Wilt said. "That video may have made us be a little more open about our plans [but] cage-free is the direction the whole industry is going and Hillandale is a leader in the egg industry."

Shapiro disagrees.

"Of course I think there is a connection," he said. "At the same time, there is a broader trend in the egg industry to go cage-free because every major egg buyer in the country — like Costco and Walmart —

have announced they are only going to be buying cage-free produced eggs [and] I suspect our expose accelerated Hillandale's announcement of their own plans."

This is not the first time Jack DeCoster's facilities have come under fire.

In 2010, more than 1,900 people across the country reported getting sick from Salmonella enteritidis linked to tainted eggs supplied by the Alden, Iowa, company Quality Egg, doing business as Wright County Egg and Hillandale Farms, an operation also managed by the DeCosters.

Austin DeCoster and his son Peter DeCoster were convicted of introducing adulterated food into interstate commerce after eggs from their Iowa farms were linked to the 2010 national salmonella outbreak.

According to The Gazette online, U.S. District Court Judge Mark Bennett sentenced the DeCosters April 13, 2015, to three months in prison. He also required the men to complete a year of probation and pay \$100,000 each. Quality Egg was fined almost \$6.8 million.

Earlier this month, according to The Gazette, the U.S. District Court of Appeals 8th Circuit affirmed on a 2-1 vote the three-month sentences for the DeCosters, who have each paid their fines.

On Tuesday, Assistant U.S. Attorney Peter Deegan said the two men are expected to file individual petitions appealing their sentences.

For his part, Shapiro remains optimistic industry-wide changes and improvements are coming.

"Cage-free is a substantial improvement," he said. "There are more improvements that can be made [and] we are making progress that begets progress."

## Oregon State Fair to host new hot crop

Security to be heavy at cannabis exhibition

BY KATIE METTLER  
THE WASHINGTON POST

In two weeks, more than 100 of Oregon's top niche horticulturists will gather to celebrate their craft at a fair considered the first of its kind, one that promises \$10,000 in prizes and colorful, proud ribbons to the best among them.

Farmers will be judged "4-H" style, they've been told, though their crops inspire categories that are far from heartland tradition.

Sativa, indica, hybrid.

These guys harvest pot.

The inaugural Oregon Cannabis Growers' Fair, according to its website, "is an opportunity to bring the entire industry under one roof to learn from 'master growers,'" and will feature the state's "first-ever cannabis live plant competition."

Judged on a litany of qualities, including color, shape, node stacking and aroma, the top nine winning pot plants will then graduate to a grander stage — the Oregon State Fair — a move that has caused some controversy among traditionalists in the Pacific Northwest.

"We are doing it 4-H style," Don Morse, chairman of the Oregon Cannabis Business Council, told The Oregonian. "You get a blue, purple or yellow ribbon. We are celebrating the plant as a farm crop from Oregon."

But it's important to note, state fair spokesman Dan Cox told The Washington Post, that these plants won't be featured in the same tent as the winners of the fair's "Curviest Vegetable" and "Most Misshapen Fruit" competition, nor will their pungent scent waft alongside the competing cattle and swine.

These plants, under the strict watch of security guards, will be relegated to the commercial expo hall, next to tables rocking the vote and salesmen pitching the benefits of owning a ShamWow!, completely separate from the exhibits embodying "Head, Heart, Hands, Health."

The plants, at least this year, are not sanctioned state fair exhibits or part of any official agricultural competition, but are considered a prop of sorts for the Oregon Cannabis Business Council booth. Legalized last July, recreational marijuana has been widely embraced statewide, and an ed-

ucational table at the state fair last year by the business council stirred little controversy among attendees, Cox said.

"It went really smoothly," Cox said. "There was no negative response."

In fact, the booth piqued interest.

The fair leadership signed off on the presence of pot plants this year, the spokesman said, as long as the business council agreed to a set of rules: the cannabis will be in a greenhouse, with security standing guard, and nobody under the age of 21 is allowed to sneak a peek. The fair's embrace of cannabis, however trepidatious, is a testament to its commitment to diversity, Cox said, despite its 151 years of agricultural tradition.

"The Oregon State Fair is approaching the whole arena of cannabis one step at a time," Cox said. "This serves as an incremental step in terms of the role of cannabis at the Oregon State Fair."

For Morse and his organization, the presence of pot seems a bit more revolutionary.

"One of the mottos for the Oregon Cannabis Business Council is safe access in a socially responsible manner," Morse told Leafly. "We regularly reach out to the community with some form of education, to destigmatize the industry and the plant. For the people at the state fair



Marijuana plants will be on exhibit at the Oregon State Fair this year.

to let this happen is really groundbreaking."

In addition to the greenhouse, companies from across the country will gather at their exhibition to offer expertise to growers on a variety of topics, including soil and lighting, Leafly reported.

"The legislature has designated cannabis as a farm crop in Oregon, and we are treating it that way," Morse told Leafly. "This is the way to celebrate the plant and the grower. There is absolutely nothing to be afraid of."

What there will not be, Morse and Cox said, is consumption of any kind.

In 2014, the Denver County Fair in Colorado, another state that has legalized recreational marijuana, featured a 21-and-over "Pot Pavilion" that digitally displayed plants and edibles. No real weed was allowed, and speed joint-rolling context used oregano instead of pot.

The Oregon State Fair, with a 2016 theme of "Here Comes the Fun," will be held Aug. 26 to Sept. 5.

And though state fair leadership didn't expect the pot plants exhibition to garner so much national attention, Cox said it's a reflection of where Oregon stands as a state.

"It's a truly diverse fair."

## Grain

Continued from Page C1

vested in agrarian-based businesses, and "it's nice to have some skin in the game," he said.

At Gromaine in Caribou, where 40 different kinds of lettuce are grown for stores such as Tiller and Rye in

Brewer, Rosemont in Portland and at farmers markets, he does. In the next five years the Noyes brothers intend to increase their grain production.

"I am excited to help the future expansion of grain education that's happening across the state and increase collaboration in the Maine-based grain economy," said Noyes, who points to efforts

in areas such as seed restoration of heritage grain, and key technical assistance grants that the alliance will continue to embrace.

"There are many, many ways the organization is doing work on a large scale," he said. "By informing decisions where grain is going in the Northeast, the [Maine Grain Alliance] is having a significant say."



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**Aislinn Sarnacki**  
Bangor Daily News reporter for Outdoors

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