Friday Notes is designed to enhance communication among various agricultural sectors, educators, students, and the public who are interested in a variety of plant, animal, food, and environmental issues. Friday Notes advocates the pursuit of credible, unbiased, science-based information. Material contained in linked articles is from the original authors and does not necessarily reflect the views of CAST.

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Spring Supermoon

April's full moon rose majestically this past week. Known also as the pink moon, its orbit was the closest of the year to Earth.

Joining the nonprofit, member-supported CAST is an excellent way to support this newsletter and CAST publications and activities. You can become a member by completing one of the following:

1. Visit cast-science.org and click on Membership, then Become a New Member.
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Thank you for your support!

April 10, 2020

Food Supply Chains Affected by Virus
But the food itself is safe

As with many businesses in the country, food production sites and grocery outlets have been hit with COVID-19 illnesses. A corn processing facility announced that several workers had come down with the virus, and some meat processors are closing temporarily due to infections. The affected facilities will be deep cleaned, but some are concerned about the overall impact on packing plants.

The CDC says that coronavirus is not passed on through food. The production and distribution systems are the challenging aspects, and workers at every level are using cleansing procedures. Grocery workers are on the front line, and many companies are installing precautionary standards—from plastic barriers to one-way aisle traffic. Restaurants are using curbside delivery, food pantries are providing grab-n-go meals, and many groups are helping those who are food insecure. From farm workers to truckers to checkout personnel, the key mission is to provide safe food for the public. The USDA and North Carolina State University, are among the many sites providing helpful information about food safety. Common sense, a community spirit, and an appreciation for farmers and food workers will go a long way during these challenging times.

News and Views

Investigating Supply Chains: The USDA will investigate why a sudden rise in beef prices due to coronavirus hoarding didn't translate into higher cattle prices for farmers.

Global Supply Chain: A steady rise in countries limiting or banning food exports has triggered warnings from U.N. food agency leaders about possible disruptions to the global food supply as the world retrenches amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Pets, Livestock, and COVID-19: An infected zoo tiger made headlines, but what are the facts about humans, pets, animals, and the virus? Although most sources say pets and livestock are "safe," the phrase "an abundance of caution" might be appropriate for us all.
Financial Help: The Small Business Administration released rules for a $349 billion forgivable loan program that is intended to help businesses, including agricultural employers, during the pandemic.

USDA Grants: The USDA is opening a second application window for funding under the Distance Learning and Telemedicine grant program.

News from the Far Side of the Barn

A Fish Story (video): Give a dog a fish, you feed it for a day. Train a dog to fish for itself, and it's a whole lot of fun.

Squirrel on the Tilt-a-Whirl (video): An unlucky squirrel got caught on a spinning bird feeder and went for a wild ride.

Pizza by Pulley (video): A pair of Missouri residents used a creative way to interact with their pizza delivery driver and retrieve their food without leaving their second-floor apartment.

Veterinarian Issue Paper and Webinar

An April 7 webinar hosted by CAST and featuring LSU's Christine Navarre focused on highlights from the important new publication, Impact of Recruitment and Retention of Food Animal Veterinarians on the U.S. Food Supply. The webinar included approximately 215 attendees ranging from the curious to experts to students. Many attendees provided thoughtful questions and comments for Navarre to respond to during the Q&A at the end of the event. The issue paper, a one-page Ag quickCAST summary, and a student study guide are available here (all free).

Food animal veterinarians in the United States safeguard livestock, poultry, and aquatic food animal health and welfare--as well as food safety and quality. They also play a role in the country's ability to prevent transboundary disease outbreaks. Now more than ever, it is imperative that the nation is able to recruit and retain food animal veterinarians--but that has become increasingly difficult. Click here to access a blog post about the Crucial Need for Food Animal Veterinarians--Past, Present, and Future.

Information Updates: CAST Blogs and Various Links

The CAST blog provides regular updates about news headlines, announcements, and pertinent educational resource materials related to agriculture, science, our members, and CAST activities. CAST's latest blog looks at humans, animals, and the virus.

Check these recent blog posts for more useful information:
March Madness basketball bracketology has been "contained" by the virus, but Iowa pork producers had their own heated contest going on. A barbecue restaurant called "Whatcha Smokin?" took top honors.

All university members of the CAST Education Program provide material about their responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. Look up the official university sites for information.

This site looks at internet options for students on low income or without access. It helps parents navigate available assistance programs and eligibility requirements while finding low-cost provider options so students can stay connected during this time.

The ten recipients of the Borlaug CAST Communication Award are excellent resources for credible information.

Click here to access the CAST YouTube channel for video content about science, food production, and agriculture.

Friday Notes News Categories


Animal Agriculture and Environmental News

Stepping Up: During the pandemic crisis, the nation's poultry and agriculture industries are working non-stop to meet nutritional needs in the United States and around the world.

Beef's Sustainability: Recent research provides scientific evidence of beef's sustainability throughout history. Click here to access infographics about the role beef has long played in our global food system.

Dairy Support Requested: Dairy groups are asking the USDA to rescue the industry from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic with production cuts and forgivable loans.

Poultry Masks Donated: This poultry company donated thousands of medical masks to help protect front-line health care workers.

Livestock and the Virus: Although, the USDA recommends that those sick with COVID-19 should restrict contact with animals, the National Hog Farmer organization points out that neither pigs nor chickens were found to be susceptible to infection with SARS-CoV-2.

Call from Cattle Producers: Farm Bureau groups in 27 states signed a letter to Secretary Perdue requesting his attention about relief to cattlemen due to volatile markets and the possibility of price manipulation.
Avian Influenza: Highly pathogenic avian influenza has been detected in a commercial turkey flock in the southwest part of South Carolina.

**Food Science and Safety News**

**Showing His Chops (video):** By using clever filming techniques, this "chop master" shows that cutting vegetables can be a fun and surreal experience.

**When Everyone Eats at Home:** This "Freakonomics" podcast features a discussion about the ways COVID-19 has shocked our food-supply system. Jayson Lusk is one of the featured commentators.

**Getting Food to the Buyers:** Farmers who sell directly to consumers are either losing or gaining sales depending on whether or not they rely on restaurant outlets, online purchases, or deliveries.

**Producer to Public:** As in some other states, Florida is trying to match up producers who are selling directly to the public.

**Not So Sweet:** A research nutritional biologist at UC-Davis warns that sugar-sweetened beverages are increasing health risk factors.

**Soy Protein:** Scientists are developing new techniques using soy protein to create a type of meat substance.

**Plant Agriculture and Environmental News**

**PPE on the Farm:** Farmers need PPE (personal protective equipment) and the shortage could affect them during pesticide applications and other procedures.

**Planting Time:** Ag retailers are on relatively firm footing as they prepare for spring following a tumultuous 2019 growing season marked by adverse weather, flooding and delayed harvest.

**Restoring Ecological Balance:** This ASA/CSSA blog looks at the way farmers care about conservation. "Nature is not a place to visit, it is home."

**Weed Fighter:** The EPA approved a herbicide for use with soybeans, giving farmers another tool as they fight herbicide resistant weeds.

**Saltwater Intrusion:** Crop producers are dealing with saltwater intrusion along the Eastern Shore in Maryland. In a recent paper, an expert ecologist explains why saline soils may have led to the agricultural failure of a prehistoric population.

**Soil Surface Temperature:** These researchers reflect on the importance of agronomic practices in determining soil surface conditions during the period after crop establishment but before canopy closure.

**International News**

**Ninja Robots Take on the Virus (videos):** From Hong Kong's subways to a Thailand science center to Chinese hospitals, robots are helping take on coronavirus.

**Fighting the Pandemic--Kiwi Style:** When it comes to the virus, New Zealand is trying to squash the curve, not just flatten it.
A herd of wild goats has taken over the deserted streets of a seaside town in Wales during human containment time.

**General Interest News**

**Species "Spillover":** Viruses have been increasingly shifting from animals to people, a recent trend that has researchers at The Ohio State University closely studying a pig virus that can survive in human cells.

**Zoonotics 101:** Learn about some of the possible reasons behind zoonotic diseases that pass between animals and humans.

**Stopping It:** This article takes a scientific look at a possible way to stop COVID-19 by blocking its proteins from hijacking, suppressing, and evading humans’ cellular machinery. These companies are working on COVID-19 vaccines, treatments, and testing.

**Historic Crises and Societal Changes:** This article looks at past public health crises and the influences on society—including changes in infrastructure, education, and other areas.

**Fuel Demand Dwindle:** A sudden lack of fuel demand in the United States has led to a closing of ethanol plants and a lack of meatpackers refrigerant.

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* American Association of Bovine Practitioners  
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* American Dairy Science Association  
* American Farm Bureau Federation  
* American Meat Science Association  
* American Meteorological Society, Committee on Agricultural and Forest Meteorology  
* American Seed Trade Association  
* American Society for Nutrition Nutritional Sciences Council  
* American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers  
* American Society of Agronomy  
* American Society of Animal Science  
* American Society of Plant Biologists  
* American Veterinary Medical Association  
* Aquatic Plant Management Society  
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* CropLife America  
* Crop Science Society of America  
* Entomological Society of America  
* Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy  
* Bayer
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