

# Friday Notes

Council for Agricultural Science and Technology

ICAST

The Science Source for Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Issues

*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 the CAST organization.

## In This Issue..... Click to Read

Objectivity and Ag Issues: P. 2

Animal Agriculture News

Food Science and Safety News

Plant and Environment News

International News

General Interest News

## Imagined Planets



Look at the [way artists portray real planets](#) that have not yet been seen.

## BCCA Nominations

[Nominations are open](#) for the 2017

Borlaug CAST Communication Award (due Feb. 6). The list of award winners includes noted scientists and ag communicators.

## Writing and Analysis

Systematic reviews and meta-analysis are increasingly being used to summarize and synthesize literature. These two courses are available, [one at Iowa State University](#) and [one at the University of York, England](#)--both in June.

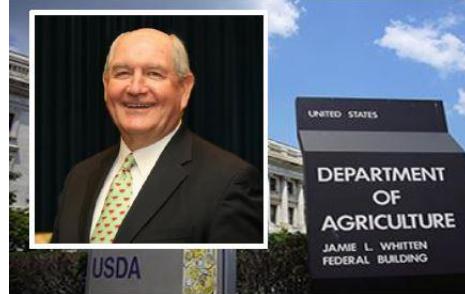
## Hands-on Course with Marine Mammals

**January 20, 2017**

## Sonny Days at the Ag Dept.

*Former Georgia Gov. Perdue nominated for leadership*

The long wait is over, as President-elect Donald Trump will nominate Sonny Perdue for agriculture secretary. A longtime rural agribusinessman, Perdue originally trained as a veterinarian, and he spent much of his career in the grain and fertilizer business. The following articles provide background and perspectives:



**The remaining slot has been filled:**

**Sonny Perdue**

\*\**AgriPulse* looks at Sonny Perdue's [overall career and reaction](#) from various agriculture organizations.

\*\*The *National Hog Farmer* publication lists [seven things to know](#) about Perdue.

\*\**Farm Journal's AgPro* article looks at Perdue's [time as governor](#).

\*\*This online site considers the nomination from a [food safety perspective](#).

## News and Views

**\*\*Ag, Trade, and the President-elect:** Dozens of U.S. farm and agribusiness groups urged President-elect Donald Trump to build upon progress made by the Obama administration in [relations with Cuba](#)--with trade and farm incomes at the forefront. And many other high-powered ag groups wrote a letter to Trump about the [importance of international trade to U.S. agriculture](#) and the need to expand agricultural exports.

**\*\*Farewell Secretary Vilsack:** Former Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack served for the entire eight years of the Obama administration,



Cal Poly's Animal Science Department is partnering with the Marine Mammal Center on an [interdisciplinary enterprise course titled "Marine Mammal Health."](#)

### ISU Program Lauded

*U.S. News and World Report* named Iowa State's [agricultural and biosystems undergraduate program number one](#) among all national universities.

### Paid Internships

The American Agricultural Editors' Association is accepting [applications for two 2017 Summer Internships](#)--one in Missouri, the other in Minnesota.



### CAST Social Media

Click here for [links to CAST sites](#): Twitter, Facebook,

Pinterest, LinkedIn, videos, and blogs.

and he gave this [interview about his days with the massive department](#) that runs everything from nutrition policy to farm conservation programs. As [explained here](#), the U.S. Dairy Export Council announced that Vilsack will join the organization as the president and CEO.

**\*\*Ethanol Study Supports the Industry:** Corn ethanol releases 43% fewer greenhouse gases than gasoline, [making the renewable fuel greener](#) than the federal government initially estimated, according to this USDA study.

**\*\*The Heat Is On:** As this animated graphic shows, [2016 was the hottest year on record](#).

## News from the Far Side of the Barn

**A Viper Strikes (video):** This high-speed camera captures the drama of a rattlesnake's strike--[venomous teeth versus a rat's agility](#).

### Wile E. Coyote and Friends

**(video):** This Michigan homeowner discovers a trail of destruction as [coyotes invade his abode](#).



"This seat's taken." On Chicago's "L" train, heading to Wrigley Field.

**Where the Wild Things Are (various links):** As this blog explains, coyotes have been [adapting to an urban lifestyle](#) in growing numbers.

## Polarized Arguments in Ag World Too

*Sometimes hard to find common ground*

Debates about raw milk can become verbally raw, opinions about the treatment of animals can get cagey or worse, and discussions about genetically modified anything can lead to testy accusations that spiral out of control. *Friday Notes* and many other publications try to examine science-based reports while also acknowledging diverse views. Not always easy. These articles are examples of the many opinions that cross the cyber desk each week:

## Real Meat or Shamburgers

These producers say [meat made in a laboratory](#) is real meat made from real cells from real animals--ones that don't have to be killed. They claim the process will be better for the environment, animals, and humanity.

This writer says the alt-meat process is promoted by incessant media coverage and results in "[shamburgers](#)" and other fake [food](#). But the worst effect, according to him, will be a centralized control of our food supply.

## Oh Snap--the Food Stamp Debate Continues

The federal government provides [SNAP benefits to roughly 23 million households each month](#), many of them single-parent homes at or below the poverty line. The USDA, rather than restricting junk foods, made incentive programs to encourage nutritious foods. While those who used food stamps bought slightly more junk food and fewer vegetables, both SNAP and non-SNAP households bought ample amounts of sweetened drinks, candy, ice cream, and potato chips.

In a heated editorial, this writer accuses the author of the SNAP article (above) of [making biased reporting appear evenhanded](#) and taking unfair shots at a much-needed program.

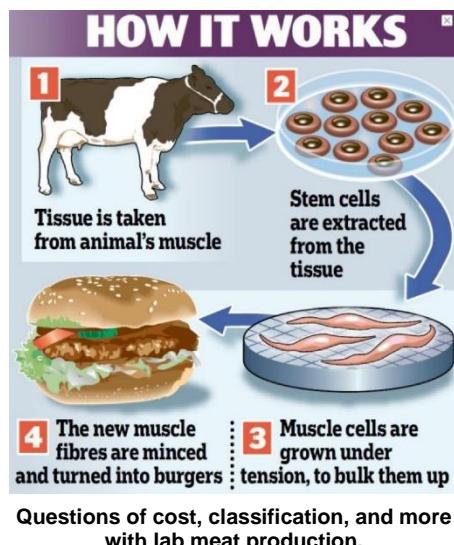
## An Even Hand? Tough to Keep It Steady Enough for All



Some writers try to examine a topic by using facts--and then letting the reader decide. This article [examines the federal estate tax levied on transfers of wealth](#) when a person dies. Called the death tax by some, the debate is complicated--and even though the article is fact driven, readers might disagree on the overall message.

Water issues have also been in the headlines, and in this commentary, the writer says both farmers and nonfarmers are [developing more awareness about water quality](#)--and he thinks this is good for consumers and producers alike.

CAST publishes issue papers, commentaries, and more, using an unbiased, peer-reviewed approach. Check out the many free [downloads in the publication section](#) on [the organization's website](#).



## Friday Notes News Categories

Photos courtesy of the Agricultural Research Service (top masthead); TopLatest News (globe at right). P. 1 Perdue pic from bipartisonpolicy.org, planet pic from npr.org, whale pic from markthiessenAP.jpg, and coyote pic from npr.org. P. 2 meat diagram from steemit.com and water pic from alpsdfiile.jpg. Animal Sec. pig pic from metro.co.uk. Plant Sec. plant pic from dfw.cbslocal.com. Inter. Sec. delivery pic from gettyimages.com. Gen. Sec. wind turbine pic from greatbigstory.com. Unless otherwise noted, photos courtesy of the USDA Agricultural Research Service.



## Animal Agriculture and Environmental News

**Chicken Talk (audio):** Open Mic features Mike Brown, [president of the National Chicken Council](#), who says the poultry industry is on an upswing--and he discusses several controversial issues.

**Stocker Calves, Research, and Profits:** Texas A&M research is focusing on identifying [optimal strategies and stocking rates](#) for producers.

**Analyzing Hog Numbers:** During the last five weeks, hog slaughter has been up 2.9%, and hog prices have been up 8% compared to a year ago. This article looks at [possible reasons for this unusual situation](#).

**Slow Grow or No Go?** The topic of using "slower-growing" broiler chicken breeds in U.S. poultry production continues to gain momentum, but this study raises [questions about its outcomes](#).

**Probiotic Pig Cleaning?** This study compared a commercial probiotic [cleaning protocol of hog houses](#) to a conventional protocol. The trial did not lead to lower infection. Most say longer-term research could be helpful.

**U.S. Beef--Asian Barbecue:** Beef organizations are [promoting barbecue concepts](#) in two of the top-performing markets for U.S. beef--Japan and Taiwan.

**Pet Power:** This expert from the College of Veterinary Medicine at The Ohio State University talks about emerging research that demonstrates the [powerful bond between pets and their owners](#).

**In Search of Climbing Cows:** UC-Davis researchers are working to develop an easy, inexpensive genetic test to help ranchers improve cattle distribution by [breeding hill-climbing cows](#).

**Titonka--Buffalo Meat in Demand:** According to this article, the [bison business is in the strongest, most stable position](#) it has ever been in, due to consumer demand for the meat.



## Food Science and Safety News

**Dirty Dozen, Clean Fifteen, and Nutrition Advice (opinion):** This editorial contends the best thing you can do is [consume lots of vegetables and fruit](#)--and not worry about "Dirty Dozen" or "Clean Fifteen" lists.

**CAST Issue Paper**  
Number 56  
October 2015

**Process Labeling of Food: Consumer Behavior, the Agricultural Sector, and Policy Recommendations**

The cover features a collage of food-related images, including a city skyline, a grocery store interior, and various food products. Overlaid on these are several circular icons with labels: "Certified Organic" (red), "rbST Free" (yellow), "Shade Grown" (green), "100% Natural" (blue), "Free Range" (purple), and "Non-GMO" (pink). Below the collage, the text reads: "Process labels can effectively bridge the information gap between producers and consumers, but such labeling often has serious unintended consequences, but such labeling often has serious unintended consequences. © 2015 CAST. All rights reserved." At the bottom, there is a detailed abstract and a note about the paper's purpose and audience.

Access CAST Issue Paper #56: [Process Labeling of Food: Consumer Behavior](#).

**Grocery Shopping Trends:** Grocery shopping is [changing dramatically to meet the needs of consumers](#) whose demographics, lifestyles, desires, and consumption trends have evolved.

[the Agricultural Sector, and Policy Recommendations.](#)

**In Store or Online? (related to above):** This article looks at grocery shoppers and the [choice between in-store or online shopping](#).

**Fat, Sugar, and Common Sense (opinion):** The anti-fat and anti-sugar factions may battle, but this food expert says the [fight against obesity cuts across the entire spectrum](#) of children's experiences.

**Adjust Your Body--and Your Attitude:** Bariatric surgery can slim your body, but [attitude and behavior also play key roles](#) in long-term weight loss, according to new research from Cornell University.

**How Sweet It Is:** Sweet potatoes are [undergoing a modern renaissance](#) in the United States--farmers produced more in 2015 than in any year since World War II.

**Kinder, Gentler Food Processing:** Ohio State University [innovations about food processing technologies](#) made the cover story in December's issue of *Food Technology*.

**Heartburn?** Some scientists say that eating hot red chili peppers [may lower the risk of death](#) from vascular-related conditions--but the [world's hottest pepper, the Carolina Reaper](#), could make you think you're dying.



## Plant Agriculture and Environmental News

**It's Alive--Maybe (video):** This site provides recommendations about how to [buy a plant and not kill it off](#).



**Corn Beauty:** A farmer reconnects with his Native American heritage by hunting for old varieties of corn. He [uncovered a brilliant strain of corn](#) now called Glass Gem Corn.

**Herbicides and Crop Sensitivity:** Texas A&M experts are working on technology that [identifies crop fields sensitive to certain herbicides](#) so farmers know which fields are safe for application of new products.

**Digging in the Dirt:** Precision Planting is beta testing their new product called SmartFirmer--it gives farmers a look into the [mystery below the soil's surface](#).

Hmm. My plant's Spotify list is loaded with songs from the Flower Power Era.

**Soybean Approved:** China recently approved Bayer and MS Technologies' Balance GT Soybeans for import. With the European Union's previous approval, the companies are [closer to a full U.S. commercial launch](#).

**Drought-resistant Bean:** The tepary bean is one of the most heat- and drought-tolerant crops in the world. It thrives on sporadic monsoon watering and [can germinate with a single rainfall](#).

**Bee Food:** These winter-blooming [plants can give bees a boost](#).

**Elixir of Life? We've Heard This Before:** Two Mediterranean plants have been [found to contain miracle properties](#) that could ward off the symptoms of both Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease.



## International News

**Tie This Kangaroo Down, Sport (video):** A jogger in Australia was [mauled by a kangaroo](#). She was knocked over and scratched by the large marsupial.

**Scottish Wind Power:** Scotland set two [new wind power records](#), as they generated enough power for all the nation's electricity needs over a record four straight days.

**Dabbawalas--Old-fashioned Delivery System**

**That Works (video):** This intricate but [chaotic system delivers hundreds of thousands of meals](#) on foot and by bike in one of India's busiest cities every day.

**Trade Banter:** An influential Chinese state-run newspaper again warned that U.S. agricultural imports could be targets for [retaliation in any trade war](#) with the new U.S. administration.



Maybe not freaky fast--but efficient and popular.

**Animal Feed Is a Gas:** A group in Finland is trying to convert [methane-rich biogas into raw materials](#) for animal feed.

**The Beans of Brazil:** Brazilian soybeans could saturate the market, but [transportation obstacles remain](#) for farmers trying to move their products.

**Buckeyes and Baby Food:** The Ohio State University has worked together with Sokoine University of Agriculture to improve the microbial [quality of homemade baby foods in Tanzania](#).

**Chopper Help:** New Zealand [cherry producers are flying helicopters](#) over their orchards to dry thousands of tons of cherries headed to Asia to feed rapidly growing demand from Chinese New Year revelers.



## General Interest News

**Wind Turbine Climber Has Work Space with a View (video):** This young woman [works at dizzying heights to repair wind turbines](#). Check out this amazing video.



Acrophobia is not in her vocabulary.

**Food as Medicine:** This "[Shop with Your Doc](#)" program sends doctors to the grocery store to meet patients who want nutrition/health advice.

**It's Not Easy, and Most of Us Aren't Rich:** The pinktractor.com blogger asked the farm community, "What is the [one thing you wish people knew about farmers?](#)"

**Precision Forecasting:** University of Florida research now provides farmers with [tools to anticipate extreme weather](#) such as severe heat or dry spells

during the various phases of crop development.

**Quit Buggin' Me:** The United Nations estimates that [two billion people practice entomophagy](#)--eating bugs. Among the most commonly eaten bugs are beetles, caterpillars, bees, grasshoppers, and ants.

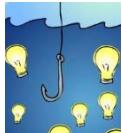
**So How Can I Cook Them? (related to above):** This blog adds to the information about entomophagy--and it provides a link to 40 insect [recipes for your cooking enjoyment](#).

**I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles:** Kansas State University researchers are deploying small air bubbles invisible to the human eye in a quest to [improve several popular dairy products](#) such as condensed milk and yogurt.

**Aggies Fighting Diseases:** Texas A&M AgriLife received a monetary boost to bolster its aggressive fight to [stem the spread of vector-borne diseases](#)--and study mosquitoes and the viruses they transmit.

## CAST Information

Check out CAST's page at the [YouTube site](#) to view highly regarded ag-science videos about probiotics, food safety, and water issues--or the latest video dealing with proposed mandatory labeling of GMO food items.



If you have a good idea for a CAST publication, contact us by [clicking HERE for the "Proposal Format" and Background Information Form.](#)"



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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 Society for Nutrition Nutritional Sciences Council
- \* American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers
- \* American Society of Agronomy



- \* American Society of Animal Science
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- \* American Veterinary Medical Association
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