

# MARKETING MATTERS

Official Publication of the Kentucky Department of Agriculture's Office for Agricultural Marketing and Product Promotion

Volume No. 3 Issue No. 2

Released May 15, 2002

Published Quarterly

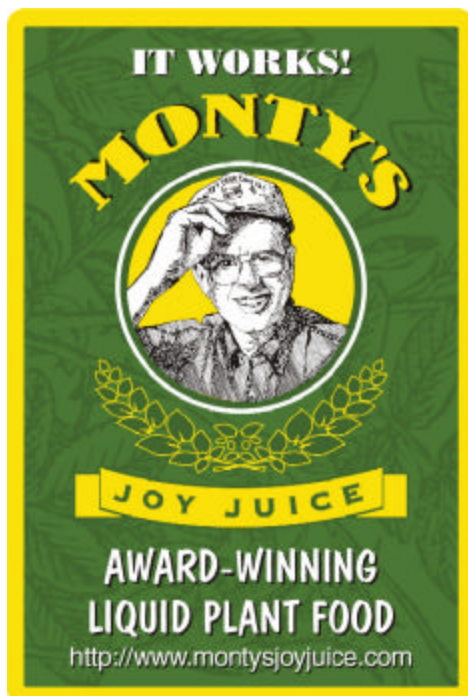
## Kentucky Plant Food Company Poised for Growth

By Bill Holleran

When Montrose "Monty" Justice first created Monty's Joy Juice, "he wanted a product that was safe for his award-winning roses and would not change the pH of the soil regardless of how often it was applied," said Dennis Stephens, company president and son-in-law to the company's namesake. Now his secret recipe is finding worldwide markets with backyard gardeners and commercial growers alike.

When Monty's Plant Food company was formed in 1997, it set out to produce a complete and balanced fertilizer with trace elements including iron, copper, manganese, zinc, and a special active ingredient. It's a 98 percent organic combination of nutrients in a very concentrated liquid form—1/2 teaspoon makes one gallon of fertilizer, and 16 ounces covers one acre of turf or row crops. Monty's said their product contains a uniquely processed humic substance, which increases cation exchange for more efficient nutrient uptake and a buffer prevents the products from burning plants, which allows foliar applications to make nutrients immediately available to the plant. Monty's also makes a seed starter that can be directly applied to the seed for faster germination.

In 2000, Monty's field trial results on 57 side-by-side corn and soybean plots produced a consistent 5 percent yield increase with just one foliar application. These results have Monty's team refocusing their efforts to test a wider range of crops including tobacco, row crops, vegetables, pastures and forage crops.



"We are aggressively seeking strategic alliances with individuals, companies, and research facilities in order to expand in a controlled fashion. We remain dedicated to getting our product in the hands of farmers," said Chairman Kevin Voss.

Now registered in 44 states, including Kentucky, the company is seeking new dealers not only in Kentucky but worldwide. Last year the company formed Monty's International, a joint venture with partners in Europe and Asia that began tests on a broader range of agricultural crops.

"We are experiencing a wide variety of success here in Kentucky with great results on row crops, pastures, turf and hydro-seeding, and tobacco," said Sonny Malone, director of sales. Nursery and garden centers have also had success using Monty's plant food on

their products.

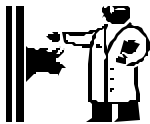
Stephens added, "As environmental safety issues continue to increase public awareness, a product like ours will offer a safe alternative for progressive farmers who desire environmentally friendly products that produce results."

Monty's said some of the obstacles farmers may face when introducing their products into the marketplace are accepting new technology, and being open to change. They suggest farmers prove things to themselves before accepting someone's positive or negative comments. Monty's also said building credibility takes time. There are many great ideas, but it takes committed resources to establish the foundation, and consumer awareness.

If you would like to sample Monty's Joy Juice, or participate in a research project or tracking study using your favorite crop or plant, call Monty's Plant Food Company at (502) 489-9888, or by fax at (502) 489-9890.

### *In this Issue*

- Kentucky plant food company
- The Doctor's Office
- New legislation
- Livestock show season
- Restaurant rewards program
- What you need to know
- Bees are important
- What's happening in aquaculture
- New logo will promote Kentucky agriculture



## The Doctor's Office

By Dr. Cris Young

Ask yourself a few questions before breeding your cows this spring. What are your herd's needs? Do you need growth at weaning? Are you breeding to retain replacement heifers? The answers to these questions will help you select the right bull. There are many cost-share programs available for bull purchasing this year. These programs help commercial producers purchase bulls that meet specific health and genetic requirements, as well as seed stock producers providing quality genetics.

Cost-share bulls must pass a Breeding Soundness Exam (BSE), which ensures the bull's fertility. Whether you are purchasing a new bull or preparing your current bull for the breeding season, a BSE is critical. The last thing you want to do is waste an entire breeding season using a bull that is infertile or unable to breed. During the BSE your veterinarian will examine your bull(s) and evaluate his semen microscopically. The veterinarian will check for signs of lameness or disease, and you can have the bull vaccinated and de-wormed in preparation for breeding season.

Remember to run an appropriate number of bulls for the number of cows you have. A yearling bull should be required to breed no more than 20 cows and an older bull no more than 30. If your pastures are large and will require your bull to do a lot of traveling, you may need to lower these numbers. Remember, your bull has to be ready to breed when you turn him in. The first 21 days are critical. If he is in poor flesh or over-conditioned he may have difficulty breeding.

We hope you are planning to market your calves through one of the Kentucky Certified Preconditioned for Health and weaned 45 days sales (CPH-45) later this year. Over the past 10 years the average price advantage for marketing a six-weight steer through a CPH sale as compared to marketing through the regular weekly sales in the state has been \$6.46/cwt. On a 600-pound steer that translates to \$38.76 more to the producer. Watch for information about CPH sale dates in future issues of Marketing Matters or contact your local veterinarian, your county extension agent, or the KDA for more information.

### Livestock show season takes off

It's SHOW TIME!! The Division of Show and Fair Promotion is very excited about the upcoming show season. The six Beef Preview shows once again set records this spring, with the Northern Kentucky Beef Preview Show having over 170 entries.

"If this is any indication of the number of entries we will see at all shows this season, it will be another fantastic year," said Wendell Bruce, Director of Show and Fair Promotion.

Following the six Beef Preview shows, the district livestock show season will begin. The division sponsors seven district lamb shows, six district dairy shows, six district swine shows, four district beef shows, and four district market goat shows. All 4H/FFA exhibitors who participate in any of the district shows will be eligible for the Commissioner of Agriculture's Scholarship Awards. Four \$500 scholarships, in the form of savings

## New legislation affecting marketing

Eighteen new bills were passed by the General Assembly last month that will affect the agriculture community. Here are some of the bills that may be of particular interest to producers and others marketing agriculture products.

House Bill (HB) 350 gives the Kentucky Department of Agriculture authority to promulgate administrative regulations for organic programs.

HB 400 exempts persons who sell less than 150 gallons of honey in a year from being required to process the honey in a certified food processing establishment or from being required to obtain a permit.

HB 517 exempts from sales and use tax domestic cervids and equipment and supplies used in cervid farming operations. This is important to cervid producers as cervids (members of the deer and elk family) are now defined as

livestock.

HB 654 establishes the Office of Agri-Tourism, establishes the Agri-Tourism Advisory Council within the Department of Agriculture, and sets membership of the council.

Senate Bill (SB) 13 encourages the sale of Kentucky-grown agricultural products to state government and other public agencies. The bill establishes a pilot project with the state Parks Department for the purchase of Kentucky farmed catfish and horticulture products if they are available, competitively priced and meet standards for quality.

To view the complete list of bills that have been passed during the 2002 legislative session visit the Legislative Research Commission's homepage, <http://www.lrc.state.ky.us/>.

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Caudill at [tess.caudill@kyagr.com](mailto:tess.caudill@kyagr.com)

bonds, will be awarded per species. These awards will be presented during the youth shows at the Kentucky State Fair in August.

Last year the Kentucky Junior Livestock Expos drew more than 900 livestock entries. We have high hopes again this year for both expos. The KJLE-East is set for June 17-18 at the Derrickson Agricultural Complex at the Morehead State University Farm in Morehead. The KJLE-West is set for Aug. 2-3 at the L.D. Brown Center in Bowling

Green. The first day of the two-day event will consist of a skill-a-thon contest and livestock judging clinics, followed by a livestock-judging contest. The second day will consist of steers, beef heifers, market goats, lambs, hogs, and dairy heifer shows.

If you have any questions or would like a complete list of rules and show dates, please contact the Division of Show and Fair Promotion at (502) 564-4983 or visit us on the Web at [www.kyagr.com](http://www.kyagr.com).

—Mary Jane Cooper

## 'Restaurant Rewards' program unveiled

By Tess Caudill

There is no denying that Kentucky farmers produce the freshest, finest quality food around. The new "Restaurant Rewards" program will reward Kentucky restaurants that purchase the delicious food products Kentuckians produce.

Kentucky has a large number of independently owned restaurants that are beginning to buy more locally produced products. If you own a restaurant or are a chef, you already know the value of serving fresh quality products. Now you will be rewarded for helping area farmers and providing healthy products for your customers.

The program will offer newspaper and magazine advertisement incentives to participating restaurants. The objectives will be to promote the restaurants, build business for them, and ultimately increase the volume of products they

buy from local farmers. The program will expand markets for Kentucky producers by increasing consumer awareness about the availability of local food products.

Participating restaurants that purchase local produce, meats, eggs, or other value-added products will be reimbursed for advertising based on the amount of local products purchased. Products must have been produced in Kentucky to be eligible. Restaurants purchasing value-added products must be able to provide evidence that a minimum of 90 percent of the product was produced in Kentucky. Restaurants must provide documentation of eligible purchases and will be reimbursed only for advertisements that promote the local foods they serve.

For more information about this program, contact Tess Caudill at (502) 564-3956.

## Bees are important to marketing

Without bees we would not have the quantity or quality of produce we eat. Most of our fruits and vegetables start out as flowers, which require pollination to reproduce. Greenhouses use bumblebees to pollinate crops like tomatoes, since honeybees don't like foraging in confined spaces.

Adequate pollination is a key to higher yields. If your fields are not producing the yields you think they should, lack of bees might be the reason. Since bee pests have depleted wild bee populations, more producers are contracting beekeepers to meet pollination requirements. It increases yields, as well as the quality of the produce.

Commercial fruit and vegetable growers can locate bee-

keepers through their local county extension office or the KDA.

Farmers should be prepared to sign a pollination contract with the beekeeper. This contract would cover when and where the bees would be placed, for how long, the cost (in Kentucky between \$35-\$50 per hive per set), the number of hives needed, access to hives, protection of the bees from spraying, and reimbursement if bees are killed.

If you would like more information on state beekeeping projects and other news about bees, you can receive "The Buzz," an electronic newsletter from KDA. To get on the list e-mail me at phil.craft@kyagr.com.

—Phil Craft

## What you need to know to create processed food products

By Beth Floyd

Many farmers in Kentucky see the importance of capturing more value beyond the farm gate by selling their products directly to consumers or by adding value to their products. Kentucky orchards add value by processing their apples into apple cider.

When developing a processed product like cider, several considerations need to be addressed. First, products must be processed in either a Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point Program (HACCP) facility or certified kitchen, to meet food safety requirements. These facilities can be costly and must be approved by the local health department.

The alternative to making a large investment in creating your own food processing facility is to use a certified kitchen. Shared-use facilities like certified kitchens de-

crease overhead costs and allow time for your business and clientele list to grow.

Many communities have certified kitchens that are not used every day, and some may be available on a part-time basis. Schools and churches are some of the establishments that may allow producers to use their facilities.

To obtain a complete list of shared-use facilities in your area, contact your local health department.

Producers looking for resources about shared-use community kitchens should contact Betty King at the University of Kentucky by phone at (859) 257-3404 or by e-mail at bking@uky.edu.

For more information about statewide processing regulations contact Guy Delius at the Kentucky Department for Public Health at (502) 564-7181.

## What's happening with aquaculture

The Kentucky Department of Agriculture sponsored Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) certification training for fish and shrimp producers April 6 at the Hardin County Extension office in Elizabethtown. Training was in conjunction with a Web-based training program through a New York Sea Grant and Cornell University. Eighteen producers took part in the certification. This training will allow those certified to process fish products in certified facilities.

The Purchase Area Aquaculture Cooperative (PAAC) was represented at the Kentucky Restaurant Association's "Food Service Expo" April 9-10 in Louisville. This

is part of a cost-share program with KDA that partially sponsors booth space for Kentucky companies. Several contacts and trade leads that will benefit the young co-op were generated.

The KDA staffed a booth at the SYSCO show in Louisville last month to showcase Kentucky products and help build partnerships with restaurant owners and chefs.

If you are a freshwater shrimp producer and have your harvest date set, contact me at (502) 564-0260 to schedule using the mobile processing unit or be listed in the August issue of Marketing Matters.

—Angela Caporelli

# New logo will promote Kentucky agriculture

By Sherry Hoffman

Agriculture Commissioner Billy Ray Smith and the Kentucky Department of Agriculture marketing staff are excited to announce "Kentucky Fresh," the new unified logo representing all Kentucky agricultural products. KDA staff realized the need for consumer identification of agriculture products in the marketplace in our effort to assist Kentucky companies and producers with increased sales. The KDA currently supports a logo program offering different logos for Christmas trees, horticulture, greenhouses, and other Kentucky commodities.

In 2001 Commissioner Smith appointed the "Buy Kentucky" Consumer Advisory Committee to assist in the development of a new unified logo. The committee members' input proved to be invaluable. For the first time, a consumer viewpoint as well as businesspersons' expertise was used in the development of a new logo. A survey of 100,000 Kentucky consumers were asked why and how they purchase products, and what was the most important factor in their purchasing



decision. Freshness was the answer.

"Understanding consumers' purchasing habits will be the key component

to a successful logo program, and we believe this committee will continue to provide valuable information," Commissioner Smith said. We at the KDA are committed to move the program forward with a public unveiling by June 1. Several activities are planned in the next few weeks in conjunction with a statewide promotional campaign beginning in mid-June, promoting the fruit and vegetable industry at Wal-Mart and Kroger retail outlets statewide.

The development of the logo program will be conducted in phases. Kentucky companies that are currently participating in a KDA logo program will be offered the opportunity to participate in the new program offering additional benefits.

If you would like additional information on the new logo program contact me at (502) 564-6676 ext. 238 or by e-mail at [sherry.hoffman@kyagr.com](mailto:sherry.hoffman@kyagr.com).

## Looking Ahead

- May 12 - Mother's Day signals strawberry season. Visit your local U-Pick patch this month.
- May 17-18 Kentucky Woodland Owners Association meeting at Pine Mountain State Park, Pineville, Ky.
- May 18-19 Kentucky Gourd Society Annual Show, Taylorsville, Ky.
- May 29-June 2 National Alpaca Conference, Kentucky Fair and Expo Center, Louisville, Ky.
- May 31 - Kentucky Women in Agriculture Conference, Elizabethtown, Ky.
- July 4-6 - National Swine Registry Summer Type Conference, Louisville, Ky.
- August 15-25 Kentucky State Fair, Louisville, Ky.

## We need your e-mail address!

As state budgets tighten up, we are looking for ways to save your taxpayer dollars. Send your address to [bill.holleran@kyagr.com](mailto:bill.holleran@kyagr.com) to receive *Marketing Matters* through e-mail, and help us save printing and postage costs. Thank you.

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## Kentucky Department of Agriculture

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