

Help available for dairy farmers

The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) has established a new reimbursement program to assist dairy producers in the state that participate in the federal Dairy Margin Coverage Program.

The new Dairy Producers Margin Coverage Premium Assistance Program reimburses Virginia dairies for the premium payment they have made for the federal program at the tier 1 level.

“Virginia’s dairy industry produces safe, wholesome products that are enjoyed both locally and around the world. But dairy farms have recently faced a whole host of challenges,” said VDACS Commissioner Brad Copenhagen. “I encourage all dairies in Virginia to participate in the federal Dairy Margin Coverage program, work with your local soil and water conservation district to implement a qualifying conservation practice and apply to

take advantage of this reimbursement funding.”

Applications for the new Dairy Producers Margin Coverage Premium Assistant Program will be available this fall. Eligible dairy producers will receive notification of the application’s availability directly and should submit program applications to VDACS by February 1, 2022.

To become eligible for the new Dairy Producers Margin Coverage Premium Assistant

Program, dairies in the state must meet the following criteria:

- Have a resource management plan or nutrient management plan that is certified or undergoing certification by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation or a local soil and water conservation district.
- Participate in the federal Dairy Margin Coverage Program at the tier I level, as contained in the federal Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018.

The Dairy Producer Margin Coverage Premium Assistance Program is a result of Delegate Wendy Gooditis’s House Bill No. 1750 and Senator Mark Obenshain’s Senate Bill No. 1193, which were unanimously approved during the 2021 General Assembly

first special session and signed into law by Governor Ralph Northam. Program funding for the current fiscal year is set at \$1 million. Reimbursement to eligible dairies will be provided on a first-come, first-served basis and is limited to the availability of funds.

GOODBYE: Cremations, outdoor services popular

FROM PAGE ONE

Eggleston said he had some customers early on in the pandemic who were told by other funeral homes they needed to cremate their loved ones because they were not comfortable embalming the body.

Eggleston used outdoor services to his advantage in order to provide families another option to cremation. Other times, ropes were put up or a veil was placed on the individual in order to prevent funeral guests from getting too close or touching the deceased.

Some families, Eggleston noted, decided to limit viewings to family only or just a few friends. Others even elected not to advertise funeral services in the paper in order to avoid crowds.

Eggleston, too, experienced an increased demand for cremation services. While many family members wanted the process to be over quickly in the form of a cremation, others would still want a traditional burial. When families did not agree, it could cause tension during the process.

Jacquelyn Reid, funeral director and vice president of Bland-Reid Funeral Home in Farmville, said families who opted for a viewing at the height of the pandemic required all guests to be screened and masked before entering. The funeral home also saw

an increase in demand for chapel services as most churches were not allowing individuals inside.

With churches temporarily shuttered and strict mandates in place dictating how many people could be present during a funeral, many families were not able to give their loved ones the service they desired with all friends and family present. In fact, many families chose to hold off any sort of memorial services for their loved ones until a day when more people could be present.

For many, that day has arrived. In recent weeks, as coronavirus cases slowed to a crawl in most of the region and social distancing/mask mandates dissolved, families are now getting together to properly celebrate and honor the life and legacy of the deceased.

While some residents are opting for celebrations of life in the form of cookouts or family gatherings in the backyard, others are choosing to hold more traditional memorial services at their local church as more and more places of worship reopen to the public.

Rev. Barry Vassar of Fitzgerald Memorial Baptist Church in Cumberland said he’s had some families request to hold memorial services for their loved ones as the anniversary of the family member’s death approaches.

He believes a final

goodbye in the form of a memorial service or celebration will give many people the closure they need.

“There’s a lot of folks who have not had that door shut or been able to work through it,” he said. “It’s important for them to get some sort of closure.”

Rev. Susie Thomas of Farmville United Methodist Church said Farmville UMC has had two memorial services in its sanctuary so far this summer for people who passed during the pandemic. More services are scheduled for the near future.

“I think they did so because the church meant so much to their family member and to them, and they wouldn’t have felt the same degree of closure had they not been able to hold the service in our sanctuary.”

Davis Mowery, a former band director at Randolph-Henry High School in Charlotte County, passed away in April of 2020, but his obituary was advertised only this past week. His memorial service is scheduled for Saturday, July 17, at St. Andrews Anglican Church in Appomattox.

Davis’ wife, Carolyn Mowery, said family and friends weren’t satisfied with holding such a small funeral during the pandemic.

Saturday’s celebration of life will give family, friends and former students a chance to celebrate Davis’ life and

keep his memory alive. “It’s going to be an upbeat, joyous occasion.”

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A sweet coalition begins

One of the east coast’s oldest agricultural activities is finding its sweet spot among Virginia’s most celebrated home-grown commodities.

More than 100 maple and tree syrup producers are being contacted to form a new statewide coalition, initiated by researchers at Virginia Tech’s Department of Sustainable Biomaterials in the College of Natural Resources and Environment. With an association’s support, Virginia can be recognized for its rich, high-quality tree

syrups, cohesively marketed and certified among the finest in North America.

Guinevere Unterbrink, a wildlife conservation student at Virginia Tech, is tracking down tree syrup producers in Virginia, no matter the size or scale of their operations.

Aside from support and resources, the coalition will ultimately raise public awareness about locally accessible Virginia-made tree syrups.

Syrups are mostly produced in western areas of Virginia, but

the positive economic implications of a syrup coalition’s marketing power may be felt statewide.

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