

Oklahoma

The Magazine of the
Oklahoma Farm Bureau
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country

Living *in a* legacy

Kelli Payne builds on the storied history of the Oklahoma National Stockyards to carry on traditions while connecting with consumers.

What the water leaves behind


Recovering in the aftermath of historic flooding

Your agent next door

Going above and beyond to help neighbors

Recapping the session

Looking back on 2019 legislative action



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ON THE COVER

Kelli Payne – fifth generation Oklahoman – rancher, and newly named general manager of the Oklahoma National Stockyards stands above with the Oklahoma City skyline in the distance. Photo by Dustin Mielke.

HIDDEN NUMBER WORTH \$50

One member family's Oklahoma Farm Bureau membership number is hidden somewhere in this issue of *Oklahoma Country* and could earn that member family \$50. To claim the cash prize, the member family must find its own hidden membership number and contact Brianne Schwabauer before the last day of the month, Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. at (405) 523-2325.

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Farm Bureau Life Insurance Company/West Des Moines, IA. Oklahoma Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company/Oklahoma City, M206-OK (5-19)

Table of Contents

Oklahoma Country

Summer 2019

Columns

- 06 Presidentially Speaking
- 08 Insurance Matters

In Every Issue

- 10 Commodity Corner
- 16 Consider the Benefits
- 34 Forward Foundation
- 36 All Around Oklahoma
- 42 Noble News
- 46 Country Gardening
- 48 Country Classifieds
- 50 Country Kitchen



Lincoln to local

With the 2019 legislative session complete, learn about OKFB's work for agriculture and rural Oklahoma.



Your agent next door

By Becky Samples

As area storms ravaged his community, Oklahoma Farm Bureau Insurance agent Bill Gibson stepped in to help not only as an agent, but also as a neighbor and friend.



Living in a legacy

By Brianne Schwabauer

Named the first female to serve as general manager for the Oklahoma National Stockyards, Kelli Payne hopes to ensure the future of the stockyards for another 109 years.



What the water leaves behind

By Dustin Mielke

With widespread flooding across the state, hear from one Oklahoma Farm Bureau member on how he, his family, and his farm were affected.



PRESIDENTIALLY SPEAKING

Sharpening our positions, shaping our future

By Rodd Moesel

President, Oklahoma Farm Bureau & Affiliated Companies

The lifeblood of Oklahoma Farm Bureau has always been a group of farmers and ranchers coming together to sit down and discuss how the future could be brighter for agriculture, rural Oklahoma and our state.

Gathering to find strength as one voice is how our organization was founded, and to this day, it remains the core of how OKFB addresses the challenges and creates opportunities to make Oklahoma agriculture better for today and better for tomorrow.

Returning to that time-tested tradition, Farm Bureau members will once again meet later this summer to focus on the future and find constructive, creative ways to address the issues we all face. Our August Area Meetings serve as the kickoff to our grassroots policy development season, and it is imperative that Farm Bureau members attend these meetings to start a very important discussion.

You can find the date, time and location of your nearest area meeting on page 38.

Our ideas about how we can improve agriculture and make rural Oklahoma's future brighter need to be shared with our fellow agriculturalists. Farm Bureau is at its strongest when we have a multitude of voices at the table, ensuring our members make their perspectives known while at the same time hearing input from fellow agriculturalists. Discussing and learning is how we build better ideas and create stronger policy.

Our success at the state Capitol next year depends on OKFB members attending area meetings this year to share their ideas and start the conversation about our organization's policy. Throughout the 2019 Oklahoma legislative session, we gathered input from Farm Bureau members and friends on a wide array of issues from taxation to rural health care and beyond. Our summary of OKFB's 2019 legislative accomplishments can be found in our legislative wrap-up on page 12.

Valuable input from our members is how we can best seize the opportunity to strengthen the policy positions Farm Bureau members deem critical to their livelihoods. It is also a time to re-focus and consider what policies may need to be changed

to better meet the needs of agriculture and rural Oklahoma. August Area Meetings provide the perfect venue for members to come together, learn from each other, and take their ideas to their county resolutions meetings.

You see, our policy discussions just get started at our area meetings. It is crucial to our success that Farm Bureau members – armed with inspiration and ideas gleaned from their area

meetings – create policy resolutions to present at their county resolutions meetings. With ideas from around the state that consider local impact to national significance,

“Farm Bureau is at its strongest when we have a multitude of voices at the table.”

— Rodd Moesel

our members can craft the organizational policy that will provide them with the voice they need at our state Capitol and even in Washington, D.C. This is the heart of our grassroots, and the heart of Farm Bureau.

I hope to see you alongside many other Oklahoma Farm Bureau members as we take an active, vocal interest in the future of agriculture through our policy development process. Together, sitting down face-to-face, we can continue the Farm Bureau tradition of bringing our best ideas together to strengthen the policy that enables us to speak with one consistent, powerful voice. **FB**

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INSURANCE MATTERS

Friends helping friends

By Gary Buckner

General Manager, Oklahoma Farm Bureau Insurance


This past spring has been a tough season for our state. Storms, torrential rain and flooding have impacted countless Oklahomans. Our hearts go out to all those affected, especially our farmers and ranchers who consistently have to contend with the extremes of Mother Nature. Although we never want to see damaging storms of any magnitude, I'm proud that our company continues to set the standard for neighbors helping neighbors. Our claims adjusters and employees have worked around-the-clock and across the state to help bring relief to our members.

In this issue you will read about OKFB agent Bill Gibson who jumped in his truck just minutes after a tornado traveled through his community of Tahlequah in the hopes of helping OKFB members. Hours before sunrise, Bill began to go door to door of each of his policyholders to ensure their safety. Many times, he had beaten the first responders to the scene. Bill didn't do this because he is an insurance agent - Bill did this

because he is a member of his community first.

I know that countless other Oklahoma Farm Bureau Insurance agents and claims employees have done the very same thing as Bill. That's why I'm proud to represent a company operated by Oklahomans for Oklahomans. Team work and communication is key during times of disaster. It's important that we can be that voice of counsel and comfort during a person's seemingly darkest hour. Our role is not of an insurance agent or employee, but as a neighbor and friend. We ride the storms out together and we rebuild together. It's what we do.

I am hopeful for a quieter summer, but until then, we will be there for our members when they need it most.

In the meantime, please check out our new blog under the "about" section at www.okfbinsurance.com. We have begun a e-blast feature where users can opt in and receive monthly tips for protecting your home, auto and other timely insurance matters. You will receive no more than two emails a month from OKFB Insurance. We hope this service will assist members to proactively take steps to better protect their lives and livelihoods. 

“Our role is not of an insurance agent or employee, but as a neighbor and friend.”

— Gary Buckner



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Changing times in Oklahoma commodities and its producers

With the recent release of the 2017 USDA Census of Agriculture, we take a look at where commodities and producers themselves rank in comparison to the rest of the nation.

Total agricultural producers in Oklahoma

129,619

MALE

79,858

FEMALE

49,761

Age ranges of producers in the state

9.23% under the age of 35

57.08% between the ages of 35-64

33.69% 65 and older

Dairy farm numbers in Oklahoma have dropped from

756 dairy farms

in 2012 to **471 dairy farms** in 2017.

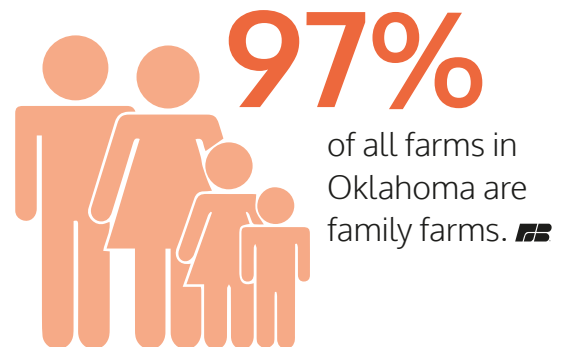


Oklahoma is ranked in total number of farms in the U.S.

4

Top 5 counties with land used for agriculture

- 1. Texas** 1,278,196 acres
- 2. Osage** 1,101,177 acres
- 3. Cimarron** 1,097,472 acres
- 4. Beaver** 1,037,049 acres
- 5. Woods** 830,009 acres



SOURCES: USDA CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE, USDA NASS



UPCOMING EVENTS

**State Farm and Ranch Family
Recognition Award due**
Aug. 1 | OKFB Home Office

**YF&R State Fair Livestock
Judging Contest**
Sept. 12 | Oklahoma City

YF&R Shotgun Shoot
Sept. 21 | McLoud

**Women's Leadership Committee
Fall Conference**
Sept. 27-28 | Oklahoma City

**YF&R Excellence in Agriculture
applications due**
Oct. 1 | OKFB Home Office

State Resolutions due
Oct. 7 | OKFB Home Office

Other Awards deadline
Oct. 15 | OKFB Home Office

State Resolutions Meeting
Oct. 16-17 | OKFB Home Office

OKFB Annual Meeting
Nov. 8-10 | Oklahoma City

**AFBF Annual Convention
& Trade Show**
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OKLAHOMA FARM BUREAU'S 2019

LEGISLATIVE YEAR-IN-REVIEW



AS THE FIRST GAVEL DROPPED IN THE OKLAHOMA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES to kick off the first session of the 57th Oklahoma Legislature, the chamber was abuzz with a sort of energy that filled the air: optimism. With a new governor, more than 50 new legislators, a budget surplus and a new hope for state government, the 2019 session began with excitement that carried through much of the legislative process. Throughout the session, Oklahoma Farm Bureau continued to work for and defend the priority issues set forth at convention last year including legislation dealing with agriculture, taxes, water and rural health care.

AGRICULTURE

The prospect of a new crop is always an exciting thing for farmers and ranchers. Oklahoma has seen a tremendous amount of interest in the production of industrial hemp along with marketing options for the crop.

Two bills were signed by Gov. Kevin Stitt this session that seek to help legally transition the production of hemp in Oklahoma from the pilot program established last year to a more permanent program under the regulatory authority of ODAFF. The federal government is expected to provide a full legal framework later this year when the U.S. Department of Agriculture adopts nationwide guidelines as provided by the 2018 farm bill. Both of this year's bills help iron out the legal issues in Oklahoma to prepare producers in the state to produce hemp once USDA rules are finalized.

To avoid misleading or confusing consumers, Farm Bureau members last year adopted policy that supports prohibiting labeling of plant-based or lab-grown food products as meat. A win for agricultural producers, the governor signed legislation this year that prevents food manufacturers from using the term "meat" on food products that are not derived from livestock or poultry.

Across the country, agricultural producers have been threatened by multi-million dollar verdicts in nuisance lawsuits. The dangerous trend in other states led OKFB members to adopt policy supporting laws that protect farmers and production practices from nuisance suits. This year, legislation established a limit on the maximum amount that may be awarded in noneconomic or punitive damages in an agricultural nuisance lawsuit. A priority issue for Farm Bureau members, the legislation was the first agriculture-related legislation authorized by the governor and was signed into law on April 4, 2019.

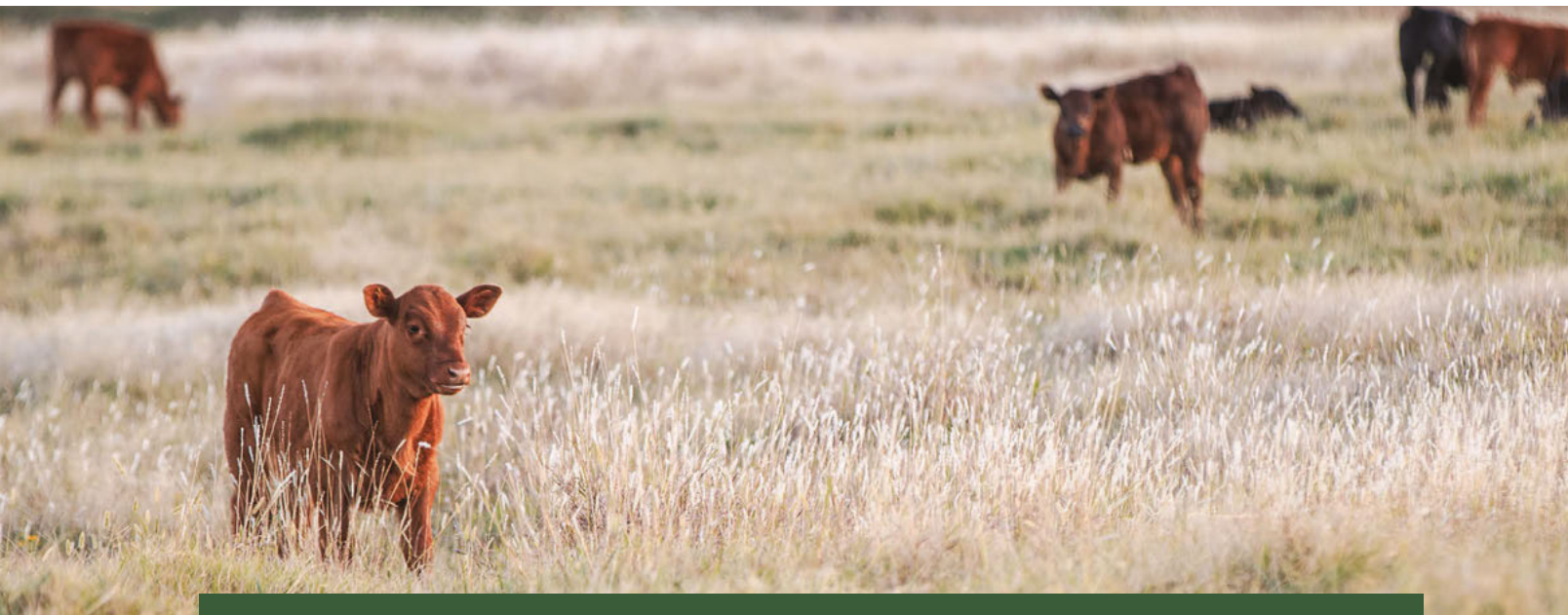
Seeking to improve the livestock industry's ability to prevent and respond to a disease outbreak was a common theme in several bills this year. In fact, animal identification methods and carcass disposal techniques alone were the subject of five pieces of legislation.

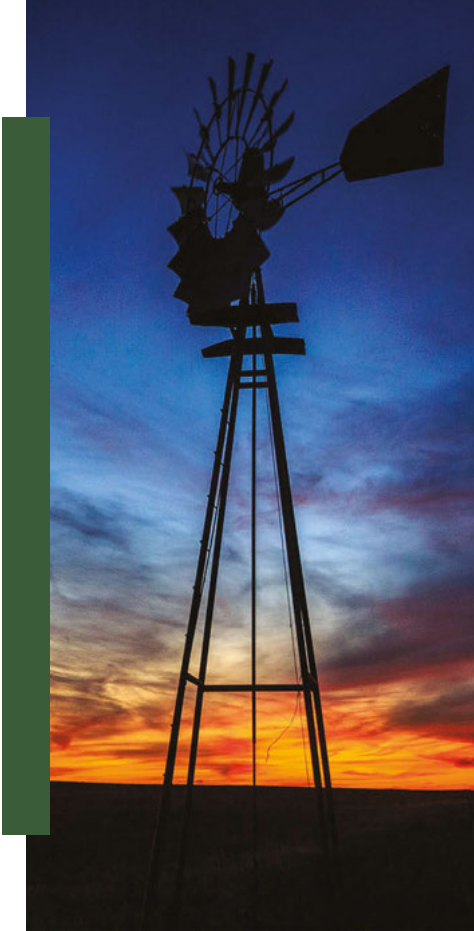
Other proposals that were signed into law by the governor included a prohibition on feeding garbage to swine and clarified procedures for the movement of livestock during in an emergency situation.

WATER

Oklahoma is a diverse state in many ways, maybe none more so than when it comes to water. Priorities, problems and potential all vary from region to region. This diversity was reflected in water-related legislation in 2019. Southeast Oklahoma groups pushed two bills that would have required the creation of complex new regulatory entities to measure stream flow and set limits on the amount of water that may be used for agricultural, industrial, municipal and recreational purposes. These in-stream flow proposals failed to advance, but are expected to be studied by subject of interim studies by the state Legislature.

Legislation was advanced to enable the creation of groundwater irrigation districts in far northwest Oklahoma to pursue federal conservation grant funding. Two Farm Bureau-supported bills were signed into law that allow Oklahoma to become a member of a tri-state commission on the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System. The commission will seek to enhance the use of this northeast Oklahoma transportation route that is vital for the movement of many agricultural commodities, fertilizer and chemicals. South central Oklahoma will be affected by a new law that grants a moratorium on new mining operations in the Arbuckle-Simpson aquifer.





RURAL HEALTH CARE

As Farm Bureau members know all too well, Oklahoma is facing a health care crisis, especially in rural areas. Numerous pieces of legislation were introduced this year aimed at addressing this issue. Unfortunately none were sent to the governor's desk, but are all still eligible to be heard in next year's legislative session.

A priority issue for OKFB, legislation this year sought to reduce the supervision requirements for nurse practitioners across the state. After much consideration, the nurse practitioners decided to lay the bill over and continue working on the language over the next year.

Similarly, legislation was introduced to ease the supervision requirements for certified registered nurse anesthetists. CRNAs collaborate with surgeons across Oklahoma every day to bring anesthesia services to Oklahomans. In many parts of rural Oklahoma, they are the only provider of anesthesia services. The legislation faced strong opposition from the Oklahoma State Medical Association, but both sides agreed to meet before next year's session to develop agreeable language for the best interests of the state.

Two bills aimed to incentivize new and existing doctors to establish practices in more rural parts of the state by providing an income tax credit up to \$25,000. OKFB is optimistic the legislation will make its way through the legislative process next year.

Multiple groups are dedicated to combating the rural health care crisis and increasing access in all areas of the state. OKFB will continue working to ensure Farm Bureau members have a voice in the conversation.

TAXES

Ad valorem taxes continued to be a priority for many state legislators this year. Both the House and Senate proposed legislation to allow cities to create public safety districts funded by ad valorem taxes. OKFB successfully worked with House leadership to prevent a vote on the legislation by the full chamber. Yet both the House and Senate passed versions out of committees remain eligible to be heard next year.

The agriculture sales tax exemption became a focus for some lawmakers again this year. A bill proposed would require a yearly renewal of the agriculture sales tax exemption card, compared to the current three-year renewal. It also would require individuals and farming corporations to provide Schedule F income on income tax returns to obtain a sales tax exemption card. OKFB and other agriculture organizations opposed this legislation and worked with the bill's author to address abuse of the exemption. The bill was not heard on the floor, but is still eligible to be heard next year.





STATE BUDGET

The final budget approved by the House, Senate and Gov. Stitt saw the highest spending in state history, exceeding \$8 billion. The Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry saw an increase of \$4 million to its annual budget, including an additional \$1 million for Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service and \$900,000 for wildfire mitigation activities and rural fire departments.

- Other highlights for Farm Bureau members include:
- \$30 million to the County Improvements for Roads and Bridges program, which restores funding raided by the legislature last year to help balance the state budget deficit
 - \$500,000 for conservation cost-share projects related to water quality in northeast Oklahoma
 - \$1.59 million for flood control structure projects through the Oklahoma Conservation Commission
 - \$378,000 for Oklahoma Conservation District programs
 - \$90,000 for an additional ODAFF state veterinarian
 - \$500,000 for ODAFF wildlife control
 - \$200 million placed in the state savings account, also known as the Rainy Day Fund

LEGISLATION <small>MONITORED BY OKFB</small>			
BILL	SUBJECT	OKFB POSITION	STATUS
SB 868	Industrial Hemp	Support	Signed by Governor
HB 2628	Industrial Hemp	Support	Signed by Governor
SB 392	Labeling of Fake Meat	Support	Signed by Governor
HB 2373	Ag Nuisance Lawsuits	Support	Signed by Governor
SB 556	Animal Identification	Support	Signed by Governor
SB 558	Animal Identification	Support	Signed by Governor
SB 559	Animal Identification	Support	Signed by Governor
SB 546	Carcass Disposal	Support	Signed by Governor
HB 2178	Carcass Disposal	Support	Signed by Governor
HB 2155	Garbage Feeding to Swine	Support	Signed by Governor
HB 2301	Livestock Movement During Emergency	Support	Signed by Governor
HB 1403	Instream Flow	Oppose	Laid Over
SB 865	Instream Flow	Oppose	Laid Over
HB 2263	Groundwater Irrigation Districts	Support	Signed by Governor
HB 2142	McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System	Support	Signed by Governor
HB 2143	McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System	Support	Signed by Governor
HB 2471	Mining Moratorium	Neutral	Signed by Governor
HB 1992	Public Safety Districts	Oppose	Laid Over
SB 471	Public Safety Districts	Oppose	Laid Over
SB 477	Ag Sales Tax Exemption	Oppose	Laid Over
SB 839	Nurse Practitioner Supervision Requirements	Support	Laid Over
SB 801	Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist Supervision Requirements	Support	Laid Over
SB 890	Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist Supervision Requirements	Support	Laid Over
HB 2511	Rural Doctor Tax Credit	Support	Laid Over
SB 1078	Rural Doctor Tax Credit	Support	Laid Over

Questions? Contact the OKFB Public Policy Division at (405) 523-2300.

TripBeat opens a world of resort vacations to OKFB members

From white sandy beaches to snow-covered mountain tops, find your next family vacation destination through OKFB's newest member benefit, TripBeat.

Are you looking to plan a vacation soon? Are you looking for affordable lodging with a home-like feel? Whether you are going to the beach or mountains, Oklahoma Farm Bureau members can now save on vacation rentals with TripBeat.

TripBeat is a member of Wyndham Destinations, offering home-like residences with furnished kitchens, living rooms and balconies or patios.

TripBeat allows OKFB members to book stays at locations from intimate studios to spacious two or more bedroom suites to enjoy on their next vacation. TripBeat offers rentals at more than 2,400 locations in approximately 90 countries including Lake of the Ozarks, Myrtle Beach, Las Vegas, Gatlinburg, San Diego, New York City and many more around the globe.

OKFB members can book seven-night stays for \$399 at hundreds of locations across the country, allowing members to lodge for as little as \$57 per night.

OKFB members can also save 25% off preferred weekly or short stays as listed on the TripBeat website. Short stays are typically three to four nights. This option allows members to travel during peak seasons or to locations with high amounts of visitors and limited lodging.

To book your vacation rental, go to www.tripbeat.com/okfb, or call 844-367-6433 and mention you are an Oklahoma Farm Bureau member.

For a full list of more than 40 member benefits available to OKFB members, visit okfamrbureau.org/benefits. 





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8 a.m. – Registration

9 a.m. – Shooting begins

11:30 a.m. – Lunch served

Proceeds will benefit the
Oklahoma Farm Bureau
Foundation for Agriculture.

Questions? Contact Zac Swartz at
405-523-2300 or
Zac.Swartz@okfb.org.

Living in a Legacy

story by **Brianne Schwabauer**
photos by **Dustin Mielke**

As men and women on horseback herd groups of 15 or more cattle along the maze of brick alleyways at the Oklahoma National

Stockyards, the faint sound of an auctioneer can be heard off in the distance selling another group of cattle to the highest bidder.

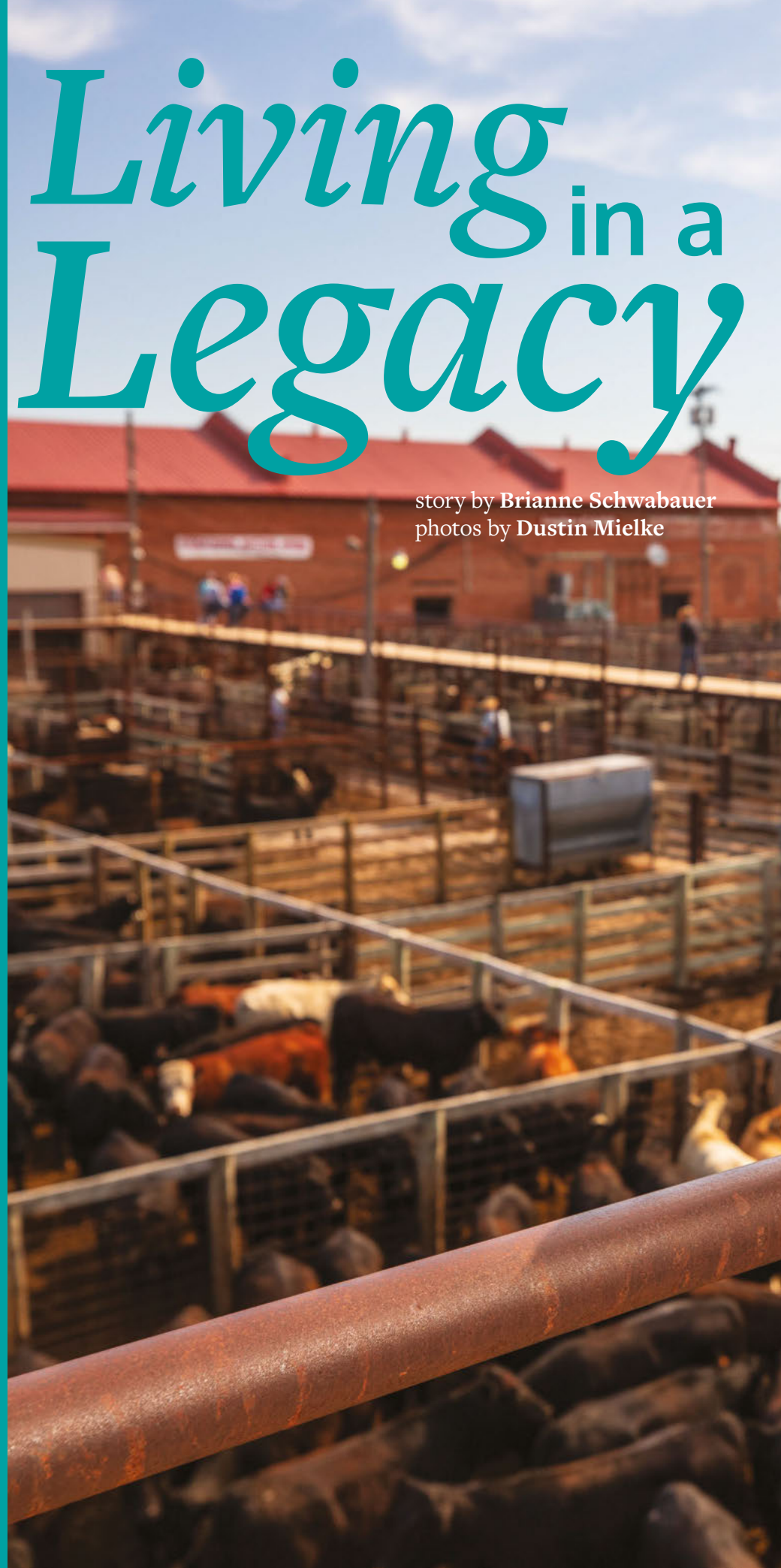
Tucked away for the last 109 years, the Oklahoma National Stockyards has served as a mainstay in Oklahoma City. As high-rise buildings in downtown continue to be built off in the distance, the stockyards continues to grow in its own right, with more than 400,000 head of cattle expected to make their way across the auction block this year alone.

In April, Kelli Payne, the sixth general manager in the organization's history and the first female, stepped in.

As a fifth-generation rancher and Oklahoman, Payne knows all too well the importance of the stockyards to Oklahoma agricultural producers and those in surrounding states. That knowledge gives her the drive and determination to ensure this priceless piece of Oklahoma history continues long into the future and is capable of enduring the changing times in agriculture.

"I know it sounds cliché, but folks are hungry for agriculture," Payne said.

But just how did Payne get to this point? The road to becoming general manager of the place she calls home was full of twists and turns that served as lessons, for better or worse.





GROWING UP STOCKYARDS STYLE

*“God opens doors for us, it’s
our job to at least peek
inside them.”*

MICHAEL KELSEY

Executive vice president
Oklahoma Cattlemen’s Association

Growing up in the rural town of Tabler, Oklahoma, Payne was always excited for the opportunity to visit Oklahoma City with her father to deliver cattle to the stockyards. During the summer months, Payne, her sister, and her father would load up on Sundays and make the trip to deliver cattle before sale day.

Once they arrived, Payne and her sister would often help their father unload cattle. If the load of cattle was too rowdy, the pair would pass the long, hot summer days by staying cool as they cleaned water troughs or counted boards on the catwalk.

A smile crossed Payne’s face as she recalled one particular trip home after a long day spent sorting cattle. With cattle trucks lined up beyond the stockyard’s iconic arch, continuing through Agnew, and down to I-40, Payne and her sisters’ eyes were quickly growing heavy, but their father shook each of them awake.

As if it happened just moments ago, she remembers him saying, “Girls, girls, girls! Look at this! Girls, this is the prettiest thing you’ll ever see.”

“I still stand in awe seeing these trucks pull in to load out,” Payne said. “It’s always had a special place in my heart.”

As she grew older, her passion for the cattle industry and the stockyard environment continued to grow as well.

Eventually attending Oklahoma State University, Payne began to pursue a degree in animal science, fitting as that had always been a passion of hers.

“I loved to work,” Payne said. “Didn’t like going to class much, so it was pretty common you’d find me down here (Oklahoma National Stockyards).”

As a student at OSU, Payne worked at the university’s dairy



As a young girl, Payne walked these same alleyways with a feeling of awe and wonder. She still does today, even while serving as general manager.

unit roughly 60 hours a week while attending class only a few days a week.

After seeing his daughter accept internships out of state for extended periods of time, work long hours, and spend most of her time around the stockyards instead of completing her degree, Payne’s father knew they needed to have a talk.

“It was cold, it was raining, we had a nasty cold front come through, and it was about midnight,” Payne said. “I’d been pushing cattle on the scale and he radioed me.”

Her father wanted to speak with her once their turn was completed for the night. Convinced she had done something wrong, Payne was tired, soaking wet and cold as she went to sit by him. With his best intentions at heart, he recommended Payne take an office job before catching the ‘sale barn bug.’ Unfortunately for him, it was already too late.

Flippantly, he suggested she take an office job with a



congressman. She decided to do just that. Payne applied for a position in Stillwater with Congressman Wes Watkins at his district office.

A few days later, Payne and her father, a commission owner, were spending their day moving cattle at the stockyards, growing tired in the summer heat but they kept pushing through it.

"The next Monday, we were in the middle of our turn and I'm running down the alley with a four-pound radio on my side," Payne said. "It's hot and Dad gets on the radio and says 'Kelli, what have you done? There's a congressman on the phone.'"

Payne interviewed with Rep. Watkins a few days later. Watkins told her he was confident that if she could handle the manure at the stockyards, she could handle the manure in Washington, D.C.

Payne began at Watkins' district office where she answered

questions from constituents on an array of topics, eventually working her way up to serving as the point of contact for all agricultural issues in Oklahoma's Third Congressional District.

During her time with Rep. Watkins, Payne began to learn about economic development, and it piqued her interest. At the time, she had no idea how that knowledge and experience she gained would help her later on in life at her second home.

Following her time at the district office, Payne helped Rep. Watkins launch his non-profit Matthew 25:40 Mission, Inc., helped revitalize multiple communities in Oklahoma through the Main Street program, and ran several local stockyards across the state.

"I was always happy where I was, it was just another opportunity to do something different and challenging," Payne said.



Payne hopes that in time, she can provide hands-on learning opportunities for tourists and urban consumers to better understand the producer.

THE FUTURE OF THE STOCKYARDS

“With the 109-year history of successful buying and selling of cattle, this is a true treasure for Oklahoma City. This district is only here because of the packers that originally came to this area and it’s a story that deserves to be told. The men and women who have created this, worked diligently in multigenerational businesses deserve to have their story told. It’s a history that’s unique to Oklahoma and with us being the last original terminal market still standing and still viable is a testament to the fortitude and the foresight these folks have had and it’s going to be around another 109 years. I just know it.”

KELLI PAYNE

In a time where consumers drive the market, craving information about the steak on their plate, Payne understands the importance of being open with them.

With its close proximity to historic Route 66, travelers from around the world walk the catwalk of the stockyards each and every day, sometimes not knowing what is below their feet. Payne hopes to change that in time.

“We definitely don’t want someone going across that catwalk with minimal or zero knowledge of what we are doing and how the process works,” Payne said. “Not just how it works A to Z here, but where these cattle are going after this. Are they going back to grass? Are they going to a feed yard?”

Realizing there is a disconnect between the producer and consumer, Payne feels that the stockyards is the perfect place to help bridge the gap between the two in hopes of better understanding each other.

Hoping to make more opportunities available to the community and visitors through hands-on learning opportunities, her goal is to help consumers understand how the food on their plate made it there. Not only with beef products, but also with other commodities as well.

As co-owner of Growing Paynes, a seasonal produce operation in Mustang, Payne and her sister have seen first-hand the genuine interest consumers have.

“We have just as many urban friends as we do our agriculture friends,” Payne said. “We’ve taken these events to more hands-on and ag-based because of who we are and what we are.”

In addition to transforming the way urban and rural consumers learn about the cattle industry and agriculture as a whole, Payne’s schedule is full of meetings with people interested in understanding the economic impact the beef industry has on Oklahoma, the United States and the world. Payne has spoken with groups including the Naval Command College, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Purdue, international and domestic-based film crews, and foreign tourist groups since accepting her position.

WORK HARD AND BE NICE

“One of the things I pray for every morning is to be a motivator to somebody because of the people that motivated me.”

KELLI PAYNE

Payne still gets emotional thinking about all that has brought her to this place, but she knows the people she surrounded herself with have made all the difference.

The support she received as a young FFA member from adviser Billy Scott, advice from her OSU dairy judging coach David Jones, backing from her family, and of course, the staff and commission firms at Oklahoma National Stockyards, have led Payne to take the phrase ‘work hard and be nice’ to heart.

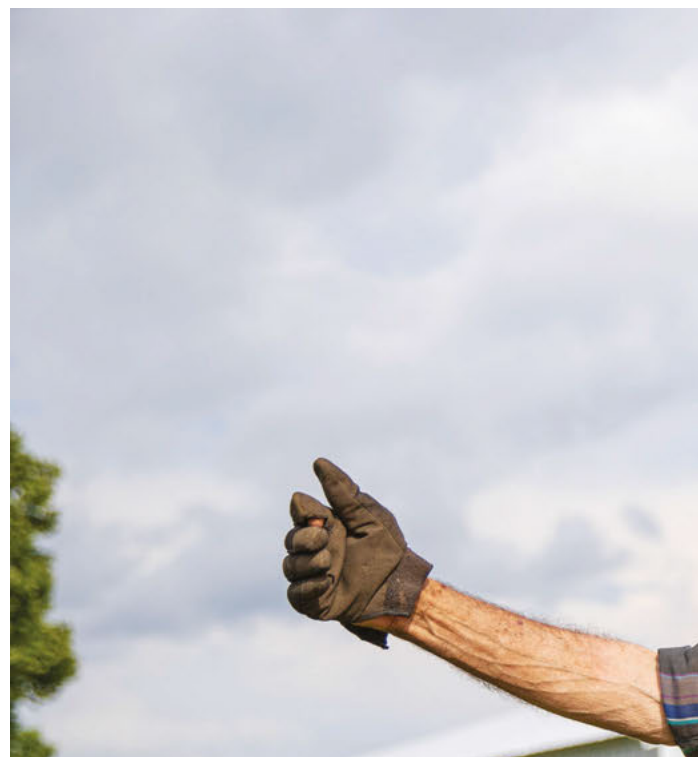
“The commission firms have all been supportive,” Payne said. “Of course, they’ve all watched me grow up in it, so I think it’s different to have been boots on the ground all this time and to earn your keep. There are those relationships.”

This may be the beginning of her time as general manager of the Oklahoma National Stockyards, but it is something she has prepared for her entire life.

“I have to pinch myself when I wake up,” Payne said. “I think, ‘Wow, I’m living on a legacy farm and I get to come and promote a legacy at the stockyards.’ No one else has got it this good. Even on the hottest hardest day, it’s still the most awesome thing in the world.” **FB**



Having grown up at the stockyards, Payne had already established relationships with commission owners, resulting in an easier transition.



YOUR AGENT NEXT DOOR

story by Becky Samples || photo by Dustin Mielke

As an Oklahoma Farm Bureau Insurance agent, Bill Gibson has the opportunity to be there for his policyholders for a number of life changes like marriage, a new home or even the birth of a child, which has enriched his almost 30-year career with the company. The insurance industry is not typically thought of as a conduit to foster community, but that's exactly how the Cherokee County Farm Bureau agent sees it.

"I consider it an honor to be able to take care of our OKFB members not as policyholders, but my friends first and foremost," Bill said. "Over the course of my career, I've had the opportunity to be by their side for some of their biggest milestones and challenges."

In late 2018, a large tornado traveled through Bill's community of Tahlequah. To make matters worse, it was the middle of

the night. Many people were unaware of the dangerous storm that touched down in their community. After Bill assessed his home, which luckily had been spared by the tornado, he sprang into action.

"I grabbed a change of clothes, boots and a chainsaw," the agent said. "I had no idea what kind of damage I would find, so I just grabbed what would at least get me started."

Bill began going to each of his policyholder's homes that had been in the path of the storm. He reached his first OKFB member's front door a little after 1 a.m. After knocking and calling out a few times, Bill sighed a breath of relief; he heard a faint voice answering on the other side of the door.

"Hello? Bill, is that you?" he heard a woman exclaim. "Honey, it's our Farm Bureau agent!"

Bill had been the first to arrive at the couple's home. To protect their cars, the couple had moved their vehicles under a tree to avoid further hail damage. The tree now laid uprooted on top of the couple's two cars. After visiting with the couple and assessing the damage he could see, he assured them he would be in touch soon. From there, Bill moved onto his next home.

At 2:45 a.m., he checked on a longtime friend and rancher in the community he feared had been caught in the worst of the storm. He was right.

Carl Holmes's property, which once boasted several barns, shop buildings and sheds, looked like a disaster scene. A tractor could easily be seen in a mangled heap where it once sat. Worried, Bill began calling for his friend. After some time, a man appeared in the doorway.

"He told me that he could feel the



Viewing his policyholders as friends more than customers, Oklahoma Farm Bureau Insurance agent Bill Gibson of Cherokee County (right) personally came to the aid of Farm Bureau members like Carl Holmes after a devastating tornado touched down near Tahlequah, Oklahoma.

pressure in his home change, and it felt like something was trying to suck his home right off of the foundation,” Bill said. “He had just enough time to grab his mattress and pull it over himself in the hallway. I realized how lucky I was and I knew I had to keep working through the night.”

Home after home, Bill encountered OKFB members who had been affected by the storms. After calling and looking for another one of his policyholders at their home, he thankfully learned that the customer was safe and also was out in the community helping with early morning rescue and cleanup efforts.

Bill continued to work tirelessly through the early morning hours before going home for a few hours of sleep and a change of clothes. After that, he began the process all over again, returning to his policyholders’ homes just as he promised.

“In devastating times like this, communication is key,” Bill said. “I try to make notes and enter them into our claims system so an adjuster would already have an idea of what to expect. This makes the process go so much more smoothly and efficiently so we can do our job and help our members get back on their feet as quickly as possible.”

Although no one ever wants to be a part of a tragedy such as a devastating storm, Bill never thought twice about going out in the middle of the night to help his members. Quite simply, Bill said he considered it a blessing to be spared any damage so he could help others.

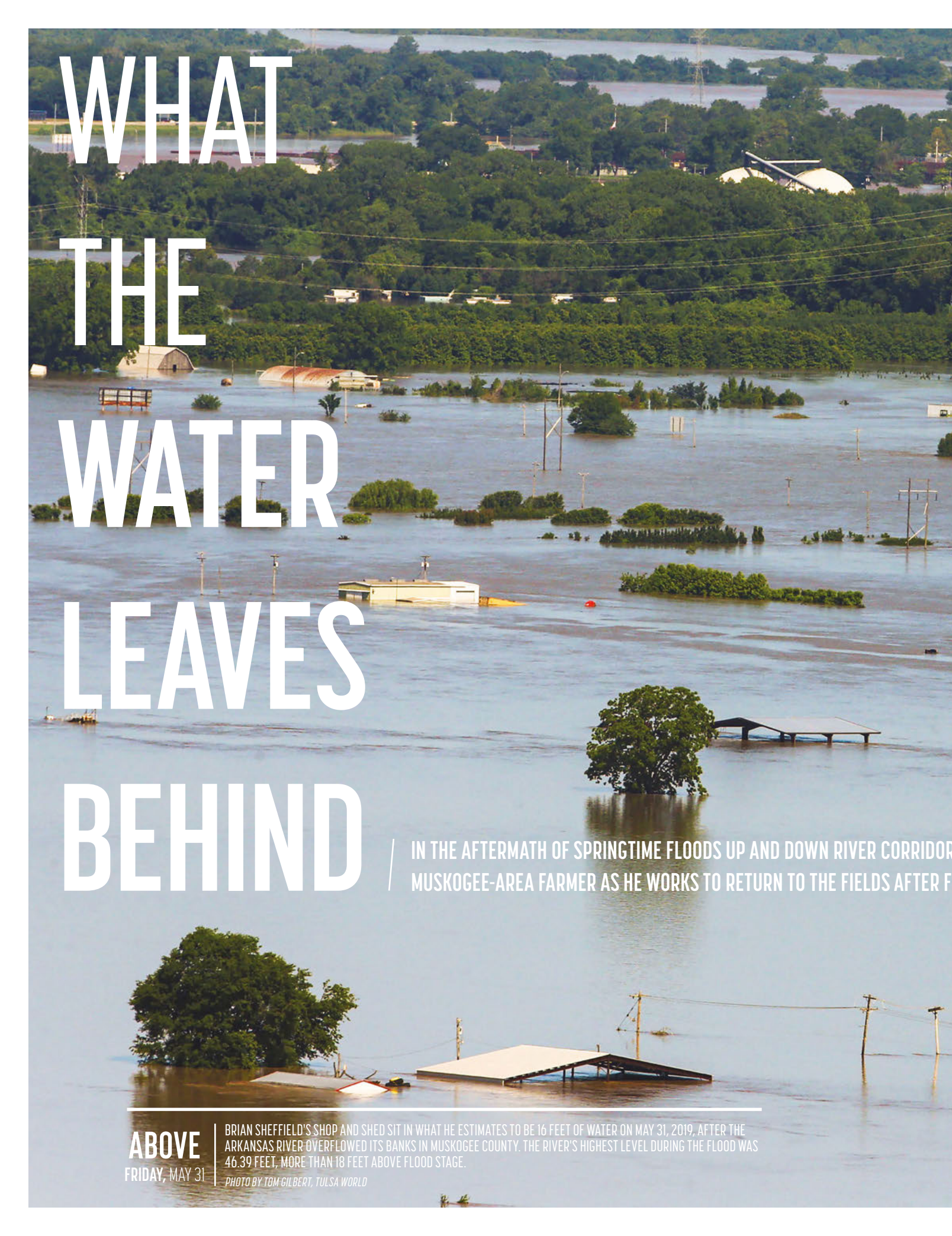
“I was proud that I could be that voice of comfort for my friends and neighbors when they needed it most,” he said. “Many times, people have no idea where to begin. That’s where I can step in and ease their grief and

worry. When I said I would be back in the morning, I meant it because the rebuilding effort is a process that takes time and careful attention to detail.”

Not only does Bill credit communication as an important factor in the cleanup process, but also humor proved to be a healing factor.

“One of my policyholders has been hit twice in the last year,” the insurance agent said. “I told him he needed to name his ranch ‘Tornado Alley.’ We both laughed about it and although it can seem odd to make light of a tornado, laughter and humor helps ease some of the tension.

“It’s my job to take care of their property and livelihoods, but I consider it a privilege to take of my friends and neighbors in my very own community.” **FB**

An aerial photograph showing a vast area of floodwater. In the foreground, a large green tree stands in the water next to a partially submerged white building. Further back, another similar building is visible. The middle ground is filled with numerous smaller trees and patches of land rising from the water. In the background, a dense line of green trees separates the flooded area from a more developed region with some buildings and power lines. The sky is not visible, as the image is dominated by the water and land below.

WHAT THE WATER LEAVES BEHIND

IN THE AFTERMATH OF SPRINGTIME FLOODS UP AND DOWN RIVER CORRIDOR
MUSKOGEE-AREA FARMER AS HE WORKS TO RETURN TO THE FIELDS AFTER F

ABOVE
FRIDAY, MAY 31

BRIAN SHEFFIELD'S SHOP AND SHED SIT IN WHAT HE ESTIMATES TO BE 16 FEET OF WATER ON MAY 31, 2019, AFTER THE ARKANSAS RIVER OVERFLOWED ITS BANKS IN MUSKOGEE COUNTY. THE RIVER'S HIGHEST LEVEL DURING THE FLOOD WAS 46.39 FEET, MORE THAN 18 FEET ABOVE FLOOD STAGE.

PHOTO BY TOM GILBERT, TULSA WORLD



AS THROUGHOUT OKLAHOMA, WE FOLLOW ONE
FLOODWATERS OVERTOOK HIS FARM FOR WEEKS ON END.

BY DUSTIN MELKE

TUESDAY,
MAY 21

THERE WAS NOT MUCH WARNING.

LITTLE TIME WAS LEFT FOR THINKING.

ALL THAT BRIAN SHEFFIELD COULD DO
WAS **TAKE ACTION.**

The Arkansas River was rapidly rising, swollen with water that had made its way down the river from Kansas and northern Oklahoma to Sheffield's farm near Fort Gibson. The river level swiftly rose above flood stage – 28 feet – and surpassed 30 feet by early afternoon.

Sheffield's farm, home and fields all sat in river-bottom land near the banks of the river in Muskogee County.

Sheffield worked with the time he had, moving essential farm equipment to higher ground, where he hoped – based on the area's history – there would only be a few inches of standing water at the height of the flooding.

"Unfortunately, we weren't able to get everything out of the bottoms before we got cut off," Sheffield said. "Pretty devastating, really for a whole bunch of people, and not just in the bottoms."

With his wife and young daughter safe, Sheffield retrieved what he could from his home, which sat only a quarter mile from the typical banks of the Arkansas river.

"Wednesday we were able to get down with boats and go down to the house and salvage what we could find," Sheffield said. "We got there right as the water was at the threshold, and it was knee-deep an hour and a half later, so it came up very fast."

Four days after Sheffield removed what valuables he could retrieve from his home, the Arkansas River crested at 46.39 feet, more than 18 feet above flood stage, according to the U.S. Geological Survey. The water level was less than two feet away from matching the record river level set in 1943.

As the river spilled out of its banks, towns were inundated, fields and pastures were covered, highways were submerged and lives were upturned. The flooding garnered media coverage from around the nation as Oklahomans, Kansans and Arkansans worked to minimize the impacts of the floodwaters up and down multiple river systems.

Sheffield, like many along the Arkansas River, could only survey the damage by boat for days on end as he waited for the floodwaters to drain off his land, away from his buildings and out of his farm equipment.

It was a waiting game, watching the water slowly subside, unsure of what he would find.



"IT'S GOING TO HURT THE GROUND FOR A WHILE - IT DOESN'T JUST BOUNCE BACK AFTER TWO WEEKS OF WATER BEING ON IT. I DON'T KNOW, TO BE HONEST, THIS IS KIND OF UNCHARTED TERRITORY FOR ME."

- BRIAN SHEFFIELD

TUESDAY,
JUNE 3

SHEFFIELD STOOD IN THE MIDDLE OF STATE HIGHWAY 10 SOUTH OF FORT GIBSON AND PEERED ACROSS A VAST EXPANSE OF WATER, MUD AND DEBRIS.

The only vehicles he had to worry about as he stood on the blacktop were police cruisers patrolling the barricaded road. Instead of being surrounded by fields with rows and rows of corn and soybeans, Sheffield found himself standing on the road between what seemed to be two lakes. Sand and silt poked through the water that stretched more than a mile back to the Arkansas River.

Visible a mile off on the horizon, past the overturned center-pivot irrigation system stood his family's farm – or at least what remained. Across the water stood his shop, a shed and farm equipment he was unable to move before the waters cut the farm off from higher ground. Noticeably missing, however, was his family's home.

"It's actually gone," Sheffield said. "Water got all the way over the top of it. We were out in a boat probably two or three days ago. I found a piece of the roof about half a mile away, so it's gone."

Two weeks after the waters rose above flood stage, Sheffield was left with many unanswered questions. He had only been able to get back into the area on dry ground for little more than a day after nearby highways had been reopened for local traffic traveling limited distances.

"Devastating," Sheffield said the scene in front of him. "Whether you're in agriculture, whether your house is flooded. Parts of the roads are gone, sandbars everywhere. It's really devastating – catastrophic – whatever you want to call it."

From the relatively high ground of Greenleaf Nursery, about a mile from where his own farm shop still stood in water, Sheffield worked on getting his most important farm equipment back into working condition. When he evacuated what he could before the water rose, Sheffield hoped there would only be a few inches of standing water in the yard at the nursery where he parked his tractors and combine.

But the flood beat all expectations. Water marks on the side of a steel building where the farm equipment rode out the flood provided a solemn measure of the floodwaters.

"We had about 8 ½ feet of water here, and it was up in the cabs of all four tractors and the combine," Sheffield said.

The small stretch of Highway 10 that Sheffield could access provided a vantage point from which he could survey the damage left by receding water.

"There's fuel tanks everywhere, trailers," Sheffield said. "There's a boat just a quarter mile away up in some trees. There's just no telling what you're going to find."

Across the road from one of Sheffield's flooded fields, concrete culverts, various types of wood and a tractor tire dotted what used to be a neighbor's cornfield. Periodically, a catfish mustered up the strength to attempt a return to deeper waters than the field's receding puddles offered.

The bizarre new reality left Sheffield with more questions than answers as he planned his next steps.

"It's going to hurt the ground for a while – it doesn't just bounce back after two weeks of water being on it," Sheffield



LEFT TUESDAY, JUNE 3

HIGH WATER MARKS ON THE SIDE OF A BUILDING AT GREENLEAF NURSERY, WHERE SHEFFIELD'S FARM EQUIPMENT WAS PARKED DURING THE FLOOD, DENOTE THE HEIGHT OF THE FLOODWATERS.

AS FLOODWATERS RECEDED, FIELDS THROUGHOUT THE RIVER BOTTOM WHERE SHEFFIELD FARMS WERE LEFT SCATTERED WITH DEBRIS, INCLUDING TREES, SHEET METAL AND TRASH.

BELOW TUESDAY, JUNE 3



ABOVE TUESDAY, JUNE 3

A FUEL TANK STRANDED BY THE FLOOD RESTS ON THE SIDE OF STATE HIGHWAY 10 BY A FIELD THAT NORMALLY WOULD BE FILLED WITH NEWLY SPROUTED SOYBEANS.



SHEFFIELD COULD ONLY STAND ON PAVED ROADS BESIDE FIELDS AND SURVEY THE DAMAGE FROM A DISTANCE IN THE AREA WHERE HE FARMS.

ABOVE TUESDAY, JUNE 3

said. "I don't know, to be honest, this is kind of uncharted territory for me."

Sheffield recalled flooding in December of 2015 as the worst he himself had experienced before this year.

"I had about three inches of water in my yard," Sheffield said of the 2015 flood. "We moved a bunch of equipment out of the yard and didn't need to. And that was at about 35 ½ feet, so it beat that one by about 11 – more than 12– feet."

At a time when his fields should be filled with rows of knee-high corn, newly emerging soybeans and thick stands of cantaloupes and melons, Sheffield's plan for what is left of the 2019 crop year is hazy at best. Due to wet springtime conditions, he had only been able to plant his melon and

vegetable crops. Corn and soybean seeds never made it into the ground.

Delayed planting combined with low commodity prices and ever-increasing input costs have consumed the minds of farmers across the country. And while Sheffield considers the options and various scenarios he may face, the flood revealed what is most important.

"Most of that's been out of sight, out of mind at this point," Sheffield said of the realities of farming. "Between homes and friends and family, helping them out – them losing stuff – trying to get our own stuff back up and running, I honestly haven't even thought about it. At this point, it's really not important."



“YOU CAN’T SNAP YOUR FINGERS AND TAKE THE WATER AWAY OR GO BACK AND CHANGE THINGS. LOOK AT WHAT YOU STILL HAVE – FRIENDS AND FAMILY – AND HOPEFULLY HAVE A GOOD SUPPORT SYSTEM AND PEOPLE TO LEAN BACK ON.”

In the midst of the catastrophe, Sheffield saw his community rally together as floodwaters rose.

“It’s been outstanding,” Sheffield said. “It’s really been neat to see. When we went to move out of the house, we started with about two boats and six people. We didn’t make any more phone calls. By the time it was said and done, there were about 20 people up on the highway and five boats. It was really heartwarming to see.”

Sheffield himself has helped neighbors, whether it was moving furniture before the flood or helping remove flooring from homes as the waters came down. The flurry of activity surrounding the catastrophe left little time for him to contemplate the gravity of the situation.

“The first couple days, everything was going by so fast,” he said. “Later, I caught myself sitting down and slowing down and thinking about (the situation), and I didn’t like the feeling, so I got up and found something to do.”

“You can sit here and look at what you’ve lost and have a pity party, but it won’t do you any good. You can’t snap your fingers and take the water away or go back and change things. Look at what you still have – friends and family – and hopefully have a good support system and people to lean back on.”



ABOVE
TUESDAY, JUNE 3

SHEFFIELD'S FARMSTEAD SITS INACCESSIBLE TO VEHICLES MORE THAN A MILE AWAY FROM THE NEAREST VANTAGE POINT.

RIGHT
THURSDAY, JUNE 13

SHEFFIELD STANDS NEXT TO ONE OF HIS CENTER-PIVOT IRRIGATION SYSTEMS THAT WAS OVERTURNED BY FLOODWATERS.

**THURSDAY,
JUNE 13**

ON A SUNNY AFTERNOON A LITTLE MORE THAN THREE WEEKS AFTER THE FLOODWATERS BEGAN TO SPILL ONTO HIS FARM NEAR FORT GIBSON, SHEFFIELD WAS PERFORMING HIS BEST CONTORTIONIST ACT.



With an air compressor wand in one hand, he worked to blow water out of the turbocharger of a John Deere tractor in hopes of getting it back to running condition and returning to the fields.

Sheffield's equipment had not moved from the place he parked it before floodwaters overtook the river bottom where he farms. Getting his tractors running was Sheffield's first priority. Even with debris still littering his farm ground, without a running tractor, farm work could not begin. The sooner he could get a tractor running, the sooner he could plant a crop and get further down the road to recovery.

The water that covered the majority of his land had receded, leaving behind a landscape that looked more like a beach than fields. Brownish-red soil stretched as far as the eye could see, dotted intermittently with tree branches, an occasional fuel tank and run-of-the-mill household trash.

The waters had receded enough that Sheffield could once again step foot on his farmstead. What he found around his shop and shed was unsettling and surprising.



“Well, it looked eerie,” Sheffield said. “Nothing was where it was supposed to be, and it was awful clean. It floated a lot of boards and any lumber we had. You get inside the shop, it looks like a bomb went off or something.”

Sheffield slid the shop door open, revealing the chaos the flood left. A thin, crusty layer of silt covered everything in sight. A wood pallet that had kept items off the shop floor before the flood was now perched in the roof rafters. Amidst his best efforts to preserve the contents during evacuation preparations, Sheffield did not anticipate that the entire building would be filled with water.

Sheffield measured the highest water mark on his buildings at just over 16 feet – enough to leave only the roofs of his shop and equipment storage shed visible. Farm equipment left around the place had not been swept away. Some of it, including a semi, combine headers, a grain drill and a sprayer, stayed in place. A grain cart listed severely, almost laid on its side by the flood.

Out in the fields, Sheffield was once again surprised to see the effects of the flood.

“To be honest, it looks about like how we left it, other than the pivots and stuff being wrecked,” he said. “We’re not finding a whole lot of erosion. We’re not finding big sand piles or silt piles. Shockingly, it looks about the same.”

Center pivot irrigation systems were overturned, wheels pointing to the sky. One pivot was pinned to the ground by the remains of a large tree. A short distance away, the Arkansas River, still above flood stage, flowed a little bit wider than usual – the floodwaters eroded the river bank further into Sheffield’s field.

Assessing the damage, Sheffield’s mind remained on the next steps required to get a crop back in the field.

“For us, we’ll probably try to roll the dice on soybeans,” he said. “If it gets real late, we might try to put some type of cover crop in, or grow some feed – hay, or something like that.

“You don’t make any money unless something’s growing.”

Offers to assist with cleanup were still pouring in from friends and neighbors, but Sheffield said he needed time to better assess the situation so a good plan can be made.

With a full recovery possibly years down the road, Sheffield said he plans to work day by day to deal with the aftermath of what the water leaves behind. As the third generation to grow crops on the Muskogee County bottomlands near the Arkansas River, he is making plans to get back into the fields and return to the business of growing food.

“I truly enjoy it,” Sheffield said. “I like farming, I like the freedom it brings, the opportunity to do something new every day and the challenges that come with it. Preferably not challenges like this, but it comes with the territory. Kind of live by the river, die by the river type thing. Not a whole lot you can do but grin and bear it.”

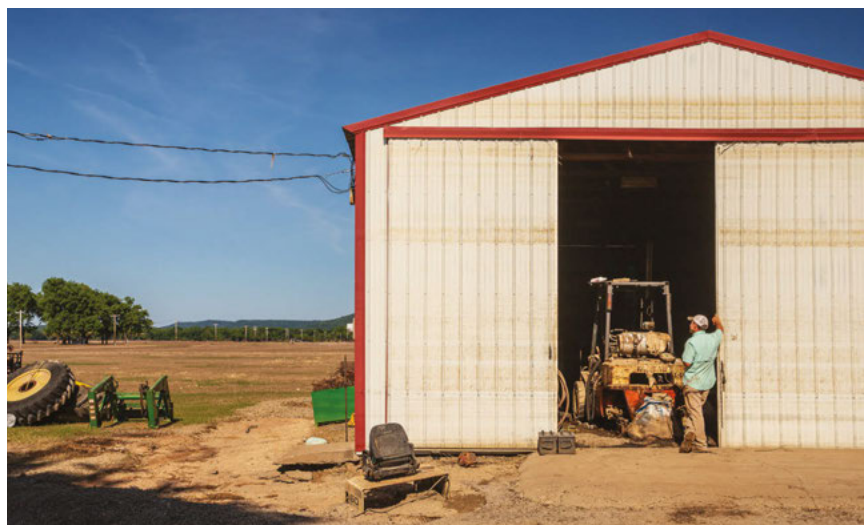
While he now knows more about the condition of his farm and his fields than he did a week ago, many unknowns linger: What kind of debris remains in his fields? Will it stop raining long enough for him to get crops planted? How long will it take the ground to recover from being covered by water for two weeks?

**“THE DAMAGE IS DONE.
NOW IT JUST COMES DOWN TO
MITIGATING THAT AND TRYING TO
RECOVER THE BEST WE CAN.
YOU CAN HOLD YOUR HEAD DOWN
LOW, OR YOU CAN PICK YOURSELF UP
AND MOVE ON. AND THAT’S REALLY
THE BEST OPTION.
JUST KEEP ON FARMING.”**



THURSDAY, JUNE 13

INSIDE SHEFFIELD'S SHOP, A THIN LAYER OF SILT COVERS ALMOST EVERY TOOL AND ITEM INSIDE THE BUILDING.



THURSDAY, JUNE 13

SHEFFIELD SURVEYS THE DAMAGE TO HIS SHOP AFTER THE FLOOD. THE WATER MARKS ON BUILDINGS INDICATE THE FLOODWATERS REACHED AROUND 16 FEET.



THURSDAY, JUNE 13

THE ERODED BANKS OF THE ARKANSAS RIVER ATE INTO ONE OF SHEFFIELD'S FIELDS.

Pork for Packs program has most successful year yet

With one in four Oklahoma children waking up each morning unsure of where their next meal will come from, the Oklahoma Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture once again partnered with ag organizations across the state to make a difference.

The Pork for Packs program provides pork sticks for the Food for Kids programs at the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma and the Community Food Bank of Eastern Oklahoma. Pork sticks are distributed to supplement the diets of chronically hungry elementary school children when school lunches are unavailable such as on the weekends or during the holidays.

Between September 2018 and April 2019, 258 Oklahoma FFA chapters donated pigs to be used in this program. In total, 957 pigs were donated, producing 1,531,200 pork sticks to be distributed across the state. In addition, \$4,222.00 was donated to the cause.

Partnering organizations include Oklahoma Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture, Oklahoma Farm Bureau, Oklahoma Beef Council, Oklahoma State University Food and Agricultural Products Center, Ralph's Meat Company in Perkins, Oklahoma FFA, and the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma.

For more information on how you can make a difference in the lives of Oklahoma children, contact Holly Carroll at Holly.Carroll@okfb.org.



Above: OKFB Executive Director Thad Doye thanks Oklahoma FFA members during the 2019 Oklahoma State FFA Convention for their continued support of the Pork for Packs program, supplementing childrens' diets when school lunch programs are unavailable.

Help educate the future of Oklahoma in agriculture through Bushels for Books program

Oklahoma Farm Bureau Women's Leadership Committee members and the Oklahoma Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture have begun collecting donations for their annual Bushels for Books program. Through this program, accurate agricultural books make their way into classrooms.

Producers can contribute to this program by donating portions of their harvested crops. To donate, visit www.okfbfoundationforagriculture.org/bushels-for-books/ and complete the form indicating how many bushels you would like to donate and take it to your local co-op or grain elevator.

The co-op or elevator will sell the grain

immediately and send the proceeds to the OKFB Foundation for Agriculture.

For questions about Bushels for Books,

please contact Marcia Irvin at 405-523-2300 or Marcia.Irvin@okfb.org.



Above: The OKFB Women's Leadership Committee presents accurate agricultural books to teachers across the state during the organization's annual convention in November.



Preserve the memory of agriculture's best in OKFB's commemorative courtyard



Help Oklahoma Farm Bureau preserve the memory of the trailblazers and pioneers from our organization's history. The Oklahoma Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture is offering brick pavers to memorialize individuals or groups in OKFB's 75th Anniversary Commemorative Courtyard.

Located at the OKFB home office in Oklahoma City, the courtyard highlights all 77 counties with a pillar emblazoned with the county name. Each pillar contains soil collected by county Farm Bureau members to highlight the unique geographical differences throughout the state. Native grasses are planted on the western side of the courtyard to mimic the landscape of Western Oklahoma. While on the east side, trees and shrubs are planted.

With your donation of \$100, you can customize the text on a brick paver to commemorate an individual or group that has made a mark on Oklahoma agriculture or Farm Bureau. The brick will be installed into the courtyard and leave a lasting memory for years to come.

Each brick can be personalized with up to three lines of text with 18 characters on each line. The pavers measure 4 inches by 8 inches.

In the center of the courtyard, red and black bricks have been laid to create the Farm Bureau logo, recognizing our organization, which brings farmers and ranchers all across the state together.

The courtyard was dedicated on March 7, 2017, where members, staff and guests gathered to celebrate 75 years of Oklahoma Farm Bureau. **FB**

If you would like to purchase a paver to be placed in the 75th Anniversary Commemorative Courtyard, visit okfbfoundationforagriculture.com/brick-pavers/. Send the form, along with the corresponding donation, to 2501 N Stiles, Oklahoma City, OK 73105.

ALL AROUND OKLAHOMA

OKFB supports ag youth at 2019 OYE Premium sale

Oklahoma Farm Bureau was proud to once again purchase and partner on purchasing premiums at the 2019 Oklahoma Youth Expo Sale of Champions on Friday, March 22 in Oklahoma City.

OKFB purchased premiums on 26 animals, including steers, barrows, lambs and goats. OKFB also added on money to 35 additional exhibitors' premiums in addition to purchasing the chalice for the

grand-champion steer shown by Cierra Collins of Tillman County 4-H

Prior to the sale, OKFB was recognized as the 2018 volume buyer for purchasing the most animals at last year's sale.



Above: Kate Jackson, a Mountain View-Gotebo FFA member, exhibits her barrow during the sale.



Above: Mooreland FFA member Tate Vanderwork sells his steer at the Sale of Champions during OYE.

Oklahomas agriculture family celebrates Ag Day at the Capitol



Above: Gov. Kevin Stitt, Sen. Greg Treat and Rep. Charles McCall stand with members of Oklahoma FFA and 4-H at Ag Day at the Capitol in Oklahoma City.



Above: OKFB Womens Leadership Committee Chair Mignon Bolay (third from right) presents a gift card to Christie Puckett, the 2019 AITC Teacher of the Year.



OKFB members visit with legislators, agencies in Washington, D.C., during Congressional Action Tour

More than 50 Oklahoma Farm Bureau members traveled to Washington, D.C., to advocate for rural Oklahoma during the organization's Congressional Action Tour April 1-5.

Key topics of discussion for the week included the implementation of the new farm bill, immigration reform, the current farm economy, the importance of the relationship between the U.S. and Canada and the importance of international trade.

"Not just in the United States, but in Oklahoma in particular, we raise more

wheat, we raise more cattle, we raise more pork, we raise more cotton, we raise more of everything than we can possibly consume," said Rep. Frank Lucas. "Therefore, it's critically important that we have world markets to sell into to have a price."

In addition, Lucas emphasized the importance for the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement to be ratified as soon as possible by Congress so that trade negotiations with Europe and China can be finalized.

OKFB members also visited with other

members of the Oklahoma delegation including Rep. Markwayne Mullin, Rep. Kevin Hern and Rep. Kendra Horn.

While in the nation's capital, OKFB members attended both Senate and Congressional briefings, met with officials from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Canadian Embassy and the House Agriculture Committee.

For more information on how to attend a Congressional Action Tour, please contact Emmy Karns at 405-523-2300.



Above: More than 50 OKFB members traveled to our nation's capitol to meet with legislators and government agencies to promote rural Oklahoma and agriculture.



Above: Elaine Flaming, a Major County Farm Bureau member, visits with Douglas George, Acting Consul General of Canada, regarding the H2A program.



Above: Sen. Jim Inhofe poses for a photo with members from Okmulgee County Farm Bureau.

OKFB to kick off grassroots policy development at August Area Meetings

Oklahoma Farm Bureau members are encouraged to gather together during the organization's annual August Area Meetings held Aug. 5 through Aug. 29 throughout the state.

The meetings mark the official kickoff of the OKFB grassroots policy development process, as well as an

opportunity to learn about the latest information on organizational activities.

Plan to attend your district meeting, and make sure to invite your fellow Farm Bureau members as we continue the great tradition of providing a grassroots voice for agriculture and rural Oklahoma.

District 1

August 5 | 6 p.m.

Hunny's Restaurant
Guymon

August 6 | 6 p.m.

Red Prairie Steakhouse
Woodward

District 2

August 8 | 6 p.m.

Kiowa County Farm Bureau office
Hobart

District 3

August 22 | 6 p.m.

Canadian County Farm Bureau office
El Reno

District 4

August 15 | 6 p.m.

Comanche County Farm Bureau office
Lawton

August 20 | 6 p.m.

Casa Roma
Ardmore

District 5

August 27 | 6 p.m.

Kiamichi Technology Center
McAlester

District 6

August 12 | 6 p.m.

Moore's Event Barn
Pryor

District 7

August 19 | 6 p.m.

Central National Bank Center
Enid

District 8

August 13 | 6 p.m.

Seminole County Farm Bureau office
Seminole

District 9

August 29 | 6 p.m.

Creek County Fairgrounds
Kellyville

Nine high school seniors receive YF&R scholarships

The Oklahoma Farm Bureau Young Farmers & Ranchers committee has awarded nine high school seniors each with a \$1,000 college scholarship.

"These nine scholarship recipients are the future of rural Oklahoma and the agriculture industry," said Brent Haken, OKFB YF&R chairman. "As fellow young farmers and ranchers ourselves, the OKFB YF&R committee is proud to support these bright students as they pursue their academic endeavors to be involved in one of the most rewarding industries out there today."

The OKFB YF&R scholarship recipients include:

- District 1: Darci Peach, Dewey County
- District 2: Dixie Boyce-Smith, Roger Mills County
- District 3: Peyton Burns, Kingfisher County
- District 4: Rio Bonham, Johnston County
- District 5: Anna Bolen, McCurtain County
- District 6: Tee Jay Trotter, Sequoyah County
- District 7: Bree Kisling, Garfield County
- District 8: Angelica Beck, Hughes County
- District 9: Ashton Cartmell, Payne County

Each year, the OKFB YF&R committee awards nine \$1,000 scholarships to high school seniors pursuing a degree in agriculture at an accredited institution of higher learning within the state.

For more information on the YF&R scholarship or to learn how to apply next year, contact Zac Swartz at 405-523-2300 or Zac.Swartz@okfb.org.

OKFB at the 2019 FFA Convention



Left: Oklahoma Farm Bureau President Rodd Moesel presents a \$25,000 check to the Oklahoma FFA Foundation May 1 as part of OKFB's sponsorship of students involved in the agricultural organization. Moesel presented the check as part of OKFB's long-running sponsorship of Oklahoma FFA during their 2019 convention.

Nash and Lucas join as OKFB summer interns

Two Oklahoma State University students have joined Oklahoma Farm Bureau for the summer months to better understand the organization while gaining skills that can be used in the professional world.

A native of Central High and an OKFB member, Camryn Lucas joined in mid-June as a general Farm Bureau intern.

Throughout the internship, Lucas will travel with field representatives across the state, learn the inner workings of the public policy team, assist the communications team with various projects, participate in grassroots membership meetings and more.

"I'm excited to learn what advocating for agriculture looks like and means on a larger scale than what I am able to do on my own," Lucas said.

Lucas, a senior at OSU, is currently studying agribusiness and agricultural economics. Growing up on a small sheep operation along with grass and wheat, Lucas hopes to better connect with agriculturalists across the state through her experiences in this internship.

"I'm excited to connect with agriculturalists across the state," Lucas said. "I hope to make meaningful connections and gain mentors along the way."

Rebekah Nash joined in mid-May as the communications intern to experience all aspects of the communications profession.

Throughout the internship, Nash will have the opportunity to develop her skills in writing, graphic design, photography and videography.

"I have always had a passion for informing the public about agricultural practices," Nash said. "So, an opportunity like being an intern for Farm Bureau will allow me to do this on a large scale."

Nash will be a senior in the fall at OSU majoring in agricultural communications and animal science. Growing up in central Illinois, she was involved in Farm Bureau from an early age.

"I would like to inform the public about the impact agriculture has on their daily lives and why it matters," Nash said.



Camryn Lucas



Rebekah Nash

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OKFB, ag leaders gather together to urge Congress to ratify USMCA for the benefit Oklahoma producers

Oklahoma agricultural leaders including Oklahoma Farm Bureau President Rodd Moesel discussed the importance of ratifying the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement to Oklahoma farmers and ranchers at an event on May 23 at the organization's home office in Oklahoma City.

The event was a stop along the Farmers for Free Trade coalition's Motorcade For Trade, a movement across 11 states in support of the ratifying the USMCA.

The USMCA, which was agreed on between the three countries to replace the North American Free Trade Agreement, is currently awaiting approval by Congress.

The agreement allows trade to continue to Mexico with no tariffs and provides new market access of dairy and poultry products to Canada.

"We not only have moral reasons to open up these (international) markets, but important financial reasons, as well," Moesel said. "A big contribution to our U.S. economy is agricultural exports."

The trade negotiations have caused significant repercussions for Oklahoma farmers and ranchers that rely on international markets. Moesel said the price of many agricultural commodities is

approximately 50 percent less compared to five years ago, while input costs and other expenses have remained the same or increased.

As an Alfalfa County wheat and cattle producer, Farm Bureau member Hope Pjesky said she is dependent on international trade, specifically with Mexico and Canada.

"Mexico is our No. 1 export market for wheat in the United States, and being from Oklahoma, we have an advantage over many other states because of our proximity to Mexico," Pjesky said. "We are able to load entire trainloads of wheat from our local elevators and send them directly to Mexico."

One of the top export markets for beef, Pjesky said a trading relationship with Mexico is also vital to livelihood of Oklahoma beef producers.

Oklahoma Pork Council Executive Director Roy Lee Lindsey shared the importance of trade for the state's pork industry.

"Any time we have a disruption in trade, it causes great disruption in our markets," Lindsey said. "It causes great pain for our producers."

Lindsey said retaliatory tariffs from Mexico and Canada that were in place

cost Oklahoma pork producers \$12 per animal. With Mexico and Canada serving as two of the largest export markets for U.S. pork, Lindsey said the USMCA preserves a zero tariff on pork going into the two countries.

"We need all of our congressional delegation to help us with ratification of USMCA," Lindsey said.

Sen. Casey Murdock, chair of the Senate Agriculture and Wildlife Committee, said the USMCA needs to be ratified by Congress as soon as possible because it helps Oklahoma farmers.

"We (in agriculture) fight Mother Nature every day," Murdock said. "We don't need to fight our Congress on doing what's right for agriculture in this country."

The Farmers for Free Trade Motorcade for Trade tour made multiple stops across the country to highlight American farmers' reliance on trade with Canada and Mexico.

Oklahoma City marked the beginning of the southern leg of the tour. The group continued on with their journey, visiting Texas, New Mexico and Arizona before making multiple stops in California.




Above: Agricultural producers and industry leaders spoke during a conference for the Farmers for Free Trade coalition's Motorcade for Trade event. This was one of many stops throughout 11 states discussing the importance of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement and how it affects Oklahoma farmers and ranchers.

Members participate in annual OKFB Commodity Tour

Roughly 60 members had the opportunity to discover new points of interest within western Oklahoma during the 2019 Oklahoma Farm Bureau Commodity Tour held May 8-10.

Stops along the three-day trip included SS Farms, Triple S Farms, P-Bar, Goat Farmer's Wife, WW Livestock, Sesaco, SportsChassis, Davis Farms, Route 66 Museum, Cornell Farms, and the Stafford Air and Space Museum.

For more information on how you can attend the 2020 Commodity Tour, contact Marcia Irvin at 405-523-2300 or Marcia.Irvin@okfb.org. 07597100 



OKFB Board member Monte Tucker inspects a piece of work at SportsChassis.



Lincoln County Farm Bureau members Arnold and Roselle Herrmann stand among many plants at Janie's Garden Center, owned by Cornell Farms.



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How can you see soil health?

Many soil health measures require laboratory analysis. However, there are a few indicators you can look and smell for right in the field.

By Jeff Goodwin

Noble Research Institute conservation stewardship leader and pasture and range consultant

Soil health is often defined as “the continued capacity of the soil to function as a vital, living ecosystem that sustains plants, animals and humans.”

We often think of soil health management as a new strategy, but it’s not. Healthy soils, with effective nutrient and hydrologic cycles, were functioning well before man decided to manage them. Agriculture in the early 1900s tended to focus more on plowing up the prairie soils with industrial technology and machinery rather than focusing

on the soil’s ecology. At the time, soils were largely viewed as a medium for growing crops.

The Dust Bowl of the 1930s changed perceptions of soil and its importance to our work and lives. For instance, in 1949, Aldo Leopold in “A Sand County Almanac” said, “Land, then, is not merely soil; it is a fountain of energy flowing through a circuit of soils, plants and animals.” Leopold went on to state, “When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it

with love and respect.”

Much has changed in how we view the soil today. We realize now that soil is living, and we’re working to learn more about its biological components. What has not changed is our responsibility as land stewards, and that process starts with how we see the soil.

You can use the following five indicators of soil health on any farm with just a shovel, your eyes and your nose.



SOIL COLOR

Soil color provides a tremendous amount of information. Soil color can tell

us the amount and state of organic matter and iron oxide, age, and other physical processes. In general, the darker the soil, the higher the organic matter content.

Soil is typically darkest in the uppermost layers of the soil profile, and it lightens as depth increases. Soil organic matter and soil organic carbon are primary drivers in biologically active soil systems. In some cases, the dark color can be due to the presence of reduced iron and manganese in our deep prairie soils.

Today, we use soil color to not only gain a general sense of organic matter but also to classify soils across the globe with a standard soil color system. Albert H. Munsell first standardized the soil color system as we know it today based on a system with three components: hue, value and chroma. It was primarily standardized for use in industry as a way for companies to order standard, consistent colors for materials. The U.S. Department of Agriculture later adopted the Munsell system as its official classification system of soil colors. Following much success in its use by soil scientists, the USDA later helped develop the Munsell Soil Color Book, now an industry-standard.



BIOLOGICAL ACTIVITY

Healthy soils are biologically active soils. The presence of biological activity can give you insight into the soil's state of health. Essentially, we are referring to the presence of earthworms, earthworm castings, dung beetles and others, or evidence of their activity.

Earthworms are not only major

decomposers of organic material, but they also are underground engineers. Earthworms create burrows through the soil profile, which increases porosity, enables water to move down and creates channels for roots. Earthworm excrement, known as castings, help increase nutrient cycling because pound-for-pound they contain significant amounts of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium.

Dung beetles are another indicator of

biological activity. Dung beetles are found on every continent except Antarctica, and they provide tremendous ecological services. These beetles take dung from the soil surface, roll it into a ball, lay their eggs in it and bury it deep in the soil. This creates a food source for their young and brings nutrient-rich organic material into the soil profile, which increases nutrient cycling and availability.



SOIL STRUCTURE

Soil structure is the arrangement of soil particles in different sizes and shapes. Structure often determines the amount of pore space between particles. Pore space is the space between soil aggregates, which the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service defines as “groups of soil particles that bind to each other more strongly than to adjacent particles.” More pore space allows for greater water infiltration.

The ability of a soil to hold its particles together and form soil structure is referred to as “aggregate stability.” Soil aggregation can occur by physical processes, such as when positively charged cations bind with clay particles. Soil aggregation can also occur

biologically by organic adhesives. These organic adhesives are created by soil microbes decomposing organic matter or by sugars excreted from plant roots. The amount of organic matter in a soil is a primary driver of aggregate stability. Commonly, aggregate stability increases as the percentage of soil organic matter increases.

Soil texture, or the amount of sand, silt or clay content, also plays a large role. Generally, soils with higher clay content inherently have greater amounts of organic matter. Thus, soil aggregation and structure are much more easily achieved. It is more difficult for sandy soils to build soil structure largely due to lower organic matter concentrations.



ROOTING RESISTANCE

When looking at a soil profile or even a shovel slice, we can often see evidence of layers of resistance. These resistance layers can be seen in the soil structure with the presence of platy structure or horizontal layers. A couple of common sources of this effect are the continuous compaction of a soil from the soil surface

and previous tillage creating what is known as a plow pan. Both of these restrictive layers limit root penetration and water infiltration.

One common indicator of a resistance layer can be found in the plant roots themselves, specifically in taproot species. On these sites, taproot plants will

show signs of “J” rooting, which means a plant root grows down to the resistance layer and turns 90 degrees because it cannot penetrate the resistance layer. In extreme cases, water infiltration is also halted at this layer, which limits the soil’s water holding capacity and ultimately exacerbates the effects of drought.




5

BIOLOGICAL ACTIVITY

The fifth indicator isn't visual, but it depends on another one of our senses: smell. The earthy smell of a biologically healthy and active soil is the presence of an organic compound called geosmin.

In 1965, American scientists isolated the primary odor of soil to a single compound, which they called geosmin from the Greek, geo (earth) and osme (odor).

Geosmin is an organic product produced by active soil bacteria. Essentially, if your soils are cycling organic matter, they will have that fragrant earthy smell. Soils can have other smells, but they are not associated with soil health. Soils absent of oxygen can have a rotten egg or sulfur smell. This is often a sign of poor drainage. 



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Succulents are becoming a big gardening trend

By Trisha Gedon

Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service

Although they have been around for many years, succulents are becoming a big gardening trend. One thing that makes them popular is they grow well in hot, dry environments where other plants may not do so well.

David Hillock, Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension consumer horticulturist, said succulents can be a great addition to any garden and landscape.

"We know successful gardening requires more than a green thumb," Hillock said. "Gardeners work hard to keep their landscapes looking nice. However, typical Oklahoma summers can be hot and dry, and these conditions aren't always conducive for a productive garden. However, succulents tend to thrive in these conditions, which makes them a great addition to a garden, especially for novice gardeners."

While easy to grow, succulents do require care to survive and thrive.

Knowing the basics of succulent care will help ensure healthy plants for years to come.

First, what exactly is a succulent and where do they come from? Oftentimes, people envision the tall, prickly cactus in the desert. However, succulent is the term used for any plant that has a swollen part that can hold excess water. The water can be stored in the leaves, stem or roots. Succulent really describes the characteristics of a plant, rather than a specific type of plant, which can be found on every continent except Antarctica.

Hillock said succulents are a fun way to experiment with plants because they can grow in so many versatile places. They can be placed right into regular flower bed or raised bed. They also are great for creating a container garden. Not all succulents are cold hardy in Oklahoma so be sure to check for hardiness and bring tender plants indoors before freezing weather.

"Once you get started working with succulents, you'll start to see all different ways in which these plants can be used," he said. "If you have an old birdbath that no longer holds water, fill it with soil and plant a variety of succulents in it; however, make sure they have excellent drainage and add drainage holes if necessary. Get creative with the containers. The plants themselves add variety and texture to your landscape; your choice of containers will, as well."

Although these plants all are called succulents, keep in mind the proper care of these plants is not necessarily one size fits all. Before purchasing succulents at a local nursery or plant store, read the tags attached to the plants.

Hillock also suggests searching for plants that look healthy.

"This includes healthy looking leaves with no tears, spots or discoloration. Check for pests on the leaves and in the soil," he said. "Carefully pull the plant out



Photos by David Hillock,
OSU Cooperative Extension





of the pot and inspect the soil and check for signs of pests or disease. In addition, look for tightly wound roots, which indicate the plant is root-bound.”


Once home, choose a spot in the landscape that receives a lot of sun. Remember, not all succulents are from the same family and may require more or less sun than other plants. When planting in a container, add extra pumice, sharp sand, grit or perlite to the potting soil. This will help ensure good drainage.

Something else to keep in mind is

that although these new additions to the garden are drought-tolerant, they still need a drink every now and then. While they can tolerate longer periods of drought, with regular watering and proper conditions, succulents can be low maintenance and last for years.

Watering cycles should include watering until the soil is damp, then allowing the soil to dry out before watering again. There’s a big difference between soil drying out and drying up. Feel the soil and if it is dry to the touch,

it is time to water. If the soil has shrunk from the sides of the pot and become hard, you have waited too long. Simply rehydrate the soil by soaking the pot in a sink or tray with an inch or two of water for a few hours until the soil rehydrates.

“Succulents are beautiful, colorful and can add so much texture and visual interest to your landscape,” Hillock said. “Whether you’re a novice or a seasoned gardener, succulents are a great choice.” 



The hot and dry summers of Oklahoma are the perfect growing conditions for succulents, especially for novice gardeners. Because of their ability to thrive in undesirable growing conditions, succulents are becoming popular in landscapes.

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*Deadline for the next issue is August 2.
The fall issue will publish in mid-September.*



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Mediterranean Pork and Roasted Potatoes

Courtesy of Oklahoma Pork Council



Pork Chop Ingredients:

- ¼ cup olive oil
- ¼ cup lemon juice
- 2 sprigs fresh rosemary
- 1 tbsp dried oregano
- 4 cloves garlic, smashed
- 4 bone-in center-cut pork chops (each 1 1/2 inches thick)
- 1 tsp each of Kosher salt and pepper

Roasted Potatoes Ingredients:

- 1 lb. baby yellow-flesh potatoes
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 12 cloves garlic
- ½ tsp finely grated lemon zest
- 2 tbsp chopped fresh chives

Directions:


In large resealable plastic bag, combine oil, lemon juice, rosemary, oregano and garlic; add pork chops. Seal bag, releasing as much air as possible; massage to coat evenly. Refrigerate for at least 4 hours or up to overnight.

Place potatoes in saucepan with enough cold water to cover; bring to boil. Cook for 8 to 10 minutes or until slightly tender, but not fully cooked; drain well. Toss together potatoes, oil, garlic, salt and pepper. Place in center of large sheet of heavy-duty foil. Fold and seal into even, flat packet.

Preheat grill to medium-high heat; grease grates well. Place packet on top rack of grill. Cook, turning once, for about 25 minutes or until potatoes are tender.

Remove pork chops from marinade and remove excess marinade. Season with Kosher salt and pepper.

Grill, turning once, for 12 to 15 minutes or until marked and instant-read thermometer inserted into center registers 145 degrees. Let stand for five minutes.

Open the potato packet carefully and transfer potatoes to serving bowl. Stir in the lemon zest and chives. Serve with pork chops. 

If you are a Farm Bureau member and want to see your recipes featured in *Oklahoma Country*, send a full list of ingredients along with preparation and cooking instructions to Brianne.Schwabauer@okfb.org or mail a hard copy to Oklahoma Country Recipes, 2501 N. Stiles Ave., Oklahoma City, OK 73105.



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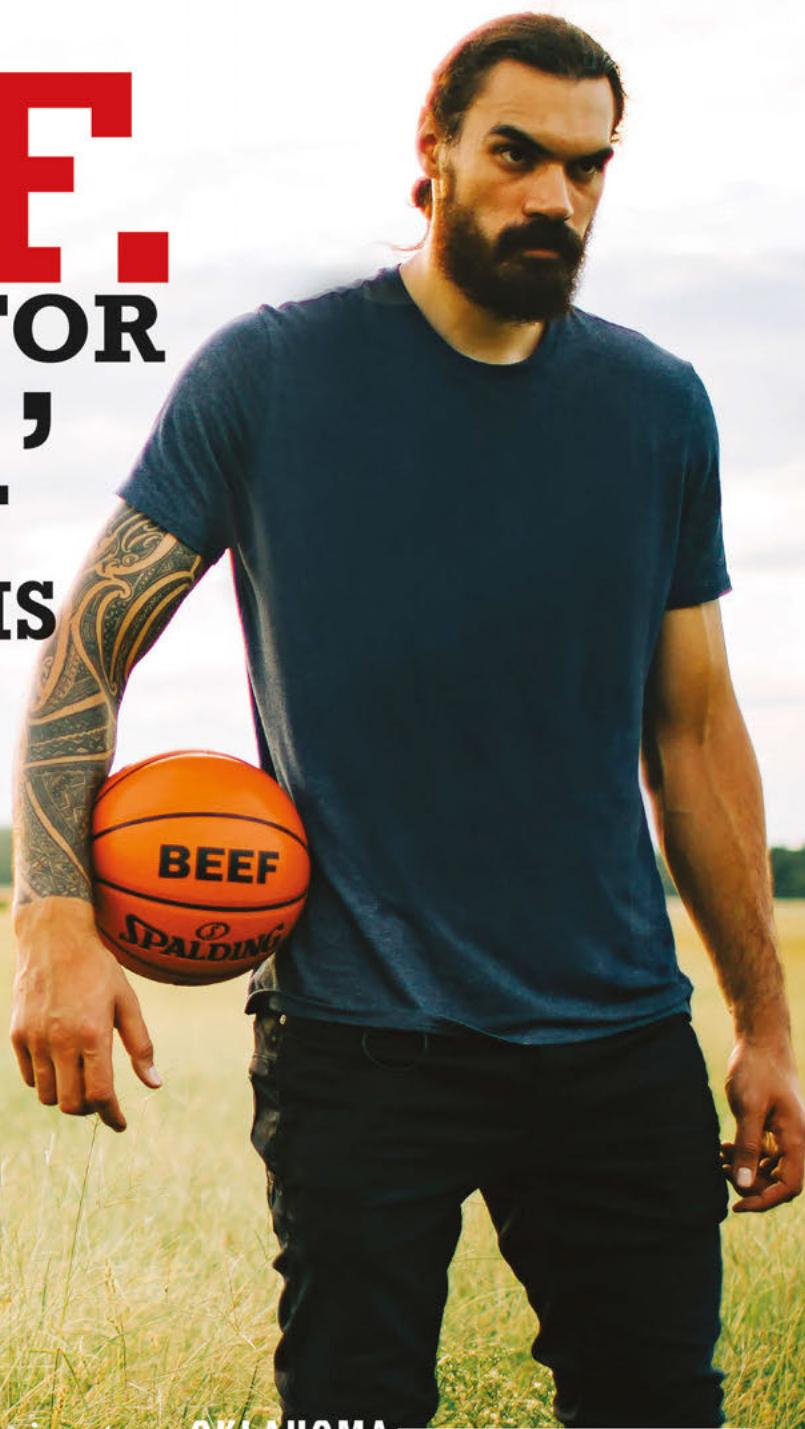
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