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DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE
RESEARCH & EXTENSION
University of Arkansas System

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Extension conducting statewide survey to help Arkansans understand Alpha-gal syndrome

Through a new [statewide survey](#), the Cooperative Extension Service is seeking community input to help Arkansans better understand Alpha-gal syndrome, a tick-associated food allergy.

[Alpha-gal syndrome](#), sometimes referred to as a red meat allergy, is a potentially life-threatening allergy and tick-borne disease. In the United States, the condition most often begins with a lone star tick bite, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Lida Araghi, assistant professor and extension nutrition and foods specialist for the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, said that after the allergy develops, people may have reactions after eating mammalian meat, such as beef, pork or lamb, or after exposure to some mammal-derived products, like dairy products or gelatin.

“One challenge is that symptoms may not happen right away and can range from mild to severe,” Araghi said. “Some people may have hives, an upset stomach or other symptoms, while others may experience serious allergic reactions. Because many Arkansans spend time outdoors, awareness and prevention of Alpha-gal are especially important.”

Araghi launched the Alpha-gal syndrome survey to learn what Arkansas adults already know about the condition, where confusion may exist and what information people most seek.

The survey is open to Arkansans ages 18 and older and takes about 10 minutes to complete. It includes questions about familiarity with Alpha-gal syndrome, symptom aware-

ness, where people have learned about the allergy and optional questions about community exposure to Alpha-gal and how it may affect food choices and daily life.

“Extension’s role is to provide practical, research-based education that meets real community needs,” Araghi said. “This

survey helps us avoid guessing and instead create educational materials that are relevant, understandable and useful for families, communities and local professionals.”

Survey responses will also help identify how people prefer to receive information about Alpha-gal, such as through in-person programs, webinars, videos or self-paced learning.

“I encourage Arkansas adults to take the survey because their input will directly shape future education efforts in the state,” Araghi said. “Even if someone has never heard of Alpha-gal syndrome, that is valuable information for us to know.”

The survey is available at bit.ly/ces-alpha-gal-survey. Contact Lida Araghi at laraghi@uada.edu for more information.

ALPHA-GAL SYNDROME SURVEY

HELP ARKANSAS UNDERSTAND ALPHA-GAL SYNDROME

- 10 MIN SURVEY
- ARKANSAS RESIDENT
- ADULTS 18+
- NO COMPENSATION

QUESTIONS?
Contact your Extension Specialist at (501) 617-2063 | laraghi@uada.edu

UofA DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE RESEARCH & EXTENSION University of Arkansas System

FAMILY & CONSUMER SCIENCES

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Egg prices fall to 2023 levels, but won't last for long

Egg prices have fallen to levels not seen since 2023, but don't expect that dip to last long, said Jada Thompson, associate professor and economist for the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture.

In a system where supply and demand dictate prices, "the lower prices are the result of an oversupply," she said.

At a time when the poultry industry is facing unprecedented pressures from highly pathogenic avian influenza, or HPAI, the nation's egg farms took something of a gamble.

"Growers, anticipating negative effects from avian influenza during the winter, increased the number of eggs they produced," Thompson said. However, the highly pathogenic avian influenza that has hit other commercial and backyard flocks passed over the egg layers.

"That left growers with plenty of eggs, and consumers are the ones who get to benefit," she said.

Egg prices made a slight recovery in May 2023, when HPAI cases were low and bird supplies ramped up. As cases increased, the prices rose again.

The current low price consumer windfall isn't necessarily good for farmers.

"Growing eggs isn't an industry with a large profit margin

and lower prices make those margins even tighter," Thompson said. "Farmers are reaching deeper into their pockets more at the moment."

However, Thompson said the egg supply will likely drop from its current overabundant state.

"We are likely to see producers reduce egg sets, slowing the replenishment pipeline," she said. "While the egg supply chain is highly dynamic and can change day to day, it is still constrained by biological timelines.

"Absent large-scale disruptions, overall supply could remain elevated for the next five to six months," she said. "However, given ongoing HPAI risk, we may see new cases emerge sooner, which could tighten supplies earlier than expected."

Read more [here](#).



Jada Thompson, associate professor of agricultural economics and agribusiness with the Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station, gave an overview of how highly pathogenic avian influenza affected egg prices and resulted in other economic impacts.

UADA's Stiles named Agribusiness Person of the Year

Scott Stiles, extension agricultural economics program associate for the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, has been named Agribusiness Person of the Year by the Jonesboro Regional Chamber of Commerce.

The chamber presented the award to Stiles on Feb. 10, during the Agri-Business Breakfast, an annual tradition during which a Farmer of the Year is also named. This year's recipient is Michael Mangrum of Lake City, Arkansas.

Stiles said that while he was honored to receive the recognition, he was only "one small part of a team."

"I've been fortunate to work with extension economists Hunter Biram and Ryan Loy over the past few years," he said. "After a short retirement in 2022, they took a chance on me and allowed me to return to work in 2024. No question, much of the credit for the work I've been involved in goes to them."

Chad Harbison, current chairman of the chamber's agri-business committee, said Stiles has been an invaluable resource for area producers for decades.

"He has been willing to share his knowledge, expertise and experience with both producers as well as college students," Harbison said. "Scott's contribution to agriculture in our area made him the clear choice for our Agribusiness Person of the Year."

Read more [here](#).



Scott Stiles, extension agricultural economics program associate for the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, center, was named 2026 Agribusiness Person of the Year by the Jonesboro Regional Chamber of Commerce.

Arkansas' Rainey recognized with Lifetime Achievement Award



At left, Ron Rainey accepts a plaque from John Anderson, head of the Cooperative Extension Service in Arkansas and past president of the Southern Agricultural Economics Association.

The Southern Agricultural Economics Association has recognized Ron Rainey's three-decade career, distinguished by a national reputation for coalition building, with its Lifetime Achievement Award.

The award was presented Feb. 3 at SAEA's annual meeting in Louisville, Kentucky.

Rainey is an assistant vice president for the University of Arkansas System Division of

Agriculture as well as director of the Southern Risk Management Education Center, whose mission is to educate farmers and ranchers to manage the unique risks of food production. SMREC is based within the Division of Agriculture and serves 13 states across the southeast U.S. He is also a professor of agricultural economics for the Division of Agriculture.

"It's extremely gratifying to see Dr. Rainey receive this national recognition for his tremendous contribution to the agricultural economics profession," said Deacue Fields, head of the Division of Agriculture and past president of

SAEA. "Ron has a passion for the land-grant mission, and he is excellent at connecting people and leveraging relationships to get results. We are very fortunate to have him on the UADA team."

"I have had the pleasure to travel a 30-year journey that I enjoy immensely," Rainey said. "I love the ability to create meaningful impact for businesses and communities. I have and continue to be on a journey of gratitude because of the relationships that support and deliver my programs across the region and nationally."

"Ron Rainey is eminently deserving of the Lifetime Achievement Award from SAEA," said John Anderson, a fellow agricultural economist who leads the Cooperative Extension Service for the Division of Agriculture. "Under his leadership, the Southern Risk Management Education Center has become the unquestioned national leader in extension risk management education.

"He continues to build and lead coalitions across academia, industry and government that are delivering innovative and effective extension programs not only in Arkansas but across whole country," Anderson said.

Read more [here](#).

Taking protein into account with the new food pyramid

Now that protein is taking a more prominent position in federal nutrition guidelines, you may have some questions about how to adjust your diet.

While the dietary guidelines are updated every five years by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the latest edition released in January is "the most significant reset of federal nutrition policy in decades," according to the HHS.

Jamie Baum, associate professor of nutrition and director of the Center for Human Nutrition, said that while most Americans already eat enough protein, the new guidelines support further

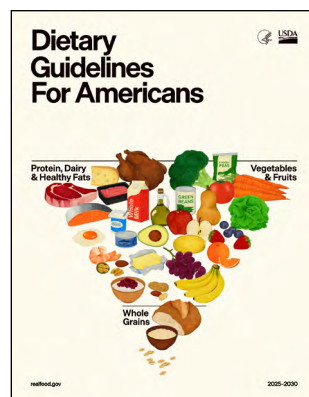
increasing protein intake for additional health benefits, such as greater muscle mass and less fat, decreased hunger, improved bone health and decreased risk of chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

While increasing protein intake can improve health benefits, Baum cautions that it comes with a tradeoff.

"You can't just take in all this protein on top of what you're already eating. You'll have to reduce caloric intake and/or increase your activity levels," Baum said.

A balanced, 2,000-calorie diet is still the daily benchmark, but calorie intake varies with age and activity levels, Baum noted. For those who are physically active, Baum recommended aiming for an upper limit of 1.4–1.6 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight.

Read more [here](#).



April Birthdays

Yvonne Mizell - April 1

Linda King - April 1

Annette Coor - April 1

Sandra Blocker - April 1

Kenneth Williams - April 2

Nancy Winterbauer Olofson - April 3

Susan Sanders - April 4

Janice Wadkins - April 5

Easter Tucker - April 5

Ione Daniel - April 6

Ann Gray - April 8

Stan Chapman - April 9

Louise Walker - April 10

John Payne - April 11

Rich Maples - April 12

Diane Clement - April 16

Mary Ruth Miner Fallin - April 17

Rebecca Reynolds - April 19

Janet Carson - April 19

Tommie Wyatt - April 22

Phil Tacker Jr. - April 22

Claude Bonner - April 25

Mary Poling - April 26

Diane Jones - April 29

Janis Reginelli - April 29

Message from the director



It feels like spring is really here to stay at this point. I know that feeling can be deceptive, but I'm going out on a limb and predicting uninterrupted spring weather from here on out. The dogwood trees seem to agree with me. As I write this, the

pleasant weather has enticed farmers into rapidly returning to their fields for planting. The only hold up right now seems to be that some are finding it too dry to plant – definitely not our normal spring situation.

The return of planting season means that winter meeting season has reached its end. It was a busy one. The market uncertainty and financial challenges facing row crop farmers this year added a heightened sense of urgency to this year's meetings. Right now, every decision matters, which means that reliable, accurate, and timely information is highly valuable.

I was able to attend several of the production meetings around the Delta over the last few weeks, and I was extremely proud of the product that

our agents and specialists are putting out to our stakeholders. Every meeting included a wealth of information about a wide variety of relevant management topics, with lots of clear, research-based advice and recommendations. It's easy to take this creation and distribution of this important information for granted. After all, we've been doing it for generations. But even a relatively straightforward project – a variety trial, for instance – represents a tremendous commitment of resources (land, labor, capital, and management) over multiple years.

The information and support provided by Extension doesn't just happen. It is produced through a lot of hard work by a dedicated and talented team of highly trained experts. It is important that we communicate this story as widely and as often as we can. Our continued support depends on the public's understanding of the importance of what we do. This year, the importance of our work ought to be clear. Our farmers are facing a tough challenge. I am confident that they are doing so with Extension-provided information and decision support that is among the best in the world.