

The Newsletter of the Genter for Sustainable Agriculture at the University of Vermont & State Agricultural College

VOLUME 1 / NUMBER 3

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Linking Agriculture and the Community

There are many types of connections that affect the sustainability of agriculture. Ecological connections on the farm are a central focus of the sustainable agriculture "movement." For example, connections among pest, crop, habitat and predator are the basis of biological pest control; connections among soil biology, physical condition, nutrient cycles and organic matter underlie soil stewardship; and connections among forage species, grazing intensity, climate, and livestock are key to pasture productivity.

Recognizing and gaining understanding of such onfarm connections are critical to the long-term health of agriculture. But that is not enough. Agriculture does not take place in a vacuum; it is intertwined with our social and economic fabric. Therefore, to be truly sustainable for generations to come, a healthy agro-ecosystem must be accompanied by markets that allow for profitability and public policies that are supportive of farms and farmers.

Conservative disciples of sustainable agriculture argue that the concept does not include socio-economic issues. The irony of such an argument is that while substantial progress is being made on farm-level issues of ecology, we're losing ground on social and



economic issues that are not supportive of those who choose agriculture as a way of life. Across the country, land grant colleges, farmers and others are developing ecologically-sound agricultural practices that are productive and also protective of natural resources. But to gain ground toward stable, vibrant, productive and healthy farms, we (Continued on next page.)

Ag Agencies Learn New Approaches to Planning and Decision-making

Recently, Extension, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Farm Services Agency (FSA) personnel from throughout New England gathered to learn about a new approach to planning and decision-making. About 50 agency employees attended one of two workshops on Holistic Resource Management (HRM) held during the last week of September. HRM is a comprehensive goal-setting, decision-making and monitoring process. It is a tool being adopted by more and more farmers, agencies, families, and communities throughout the country.

The Center for Sustainable Agriculture organized the workshops as part of the New England Sustainable Agriculture Extension Training Program. This program, funded through the Northeast Sustainable Agriculture & Education (SARE) Program is aimed at providing professional development opportunities in sustainable agriculture for Extension and other USDA agency personnel. The planning committee overseeing the project includes extension and agency personnel from all six New England states and staff from the Maine Organic Farmers & Gardeners Association and the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont.

In March of this year, the New England project sponsored a regional conference called *Changing Technologies, Changing Values* in Waterville Valley, New Hampshire, attended by about 250 Extension, NRCS, FSA employees and farmers. The purpose of the conference was to train extension and other USDA agency personnel in sustainable agriculture concepts and practices. *(Continued on next page.)* ("Linking Agriculture and the Community," continued from page 1.) must fully incorporate socio-economic issues into our agricultural agenda, alongside production issues. Just as farmers must integrate market, labor, regulatory, business and family issues with production, so too must academia, agencies and government become more cognizant of the context in which farming takes place.

Cultivating Connections attempts to put into practice this broad vision. We will include coverage of progressive agricultural research (see *The Road to Developing Greenhouse Biocontrols*, p.3) and extension programs (*Ag Agencies Learn New Approaches to Planning and Decision-making*, p. 1). You will also find articles about youth education (*Institute Sows Seeds of Understanding and Educational Change*, p.4) and about networks of people working on specific issues. Plus, we'll do our best to alert you to courses, farm meetings, tours and conferences related to sustainable agriculture (see calendar insert), although by no means can we list all such events. And finally, we include a "farm profile" (*The Farm Between*, p.5) that tells a true-life story of how production and social connections are integrated on a farm.

While it is difficult to describe all the ways in which farms connect with society, the strongest links between farming and other aspects of life in Vermont have in common their dependence upon our "working landscape." The well-must also fully incorporate socio-economic issues into our agricultural agenda, being of our farms and forests is inextricably tied to the maintenance of Vermont's working landscape.

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Cultivating Connections, a newsletter of the Center for Sustainable Agriculture at the University of Vermont and State Agricultural College, is produced quarterly to encourage people with a diversity of interests to collaborate in fostering an understanding of agricultural issues that will lead to personal, institutional, organizational, and community decisions that encourage farming in Vermont.

Center Staff

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The University of Vermont Extension System and U.S. Department of Agriculture, cooperating, offer education and employment to everyone without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, and marital or familial status.



("Ag Agencies Learn New Approaches to Planning and Decision-making," continued from page 1.)

One of the recommendations for further training needs of participants was information on whole systems approaches to farm management and planning.

Many of the people who attended the trainings were looking for new tools to use as

they work with farmer clients facing ever more complex situations regarding the management of their resources. The decisions farmers and their advisors face are no longer simple production- based decisions. They are complex and, at times, laden with conflicting goals and pressures. The HRM process helps people begin planning and decision-making by identifying the values upon which their decisions will be based. Users are then encouraged to develop a comprehensive goal which includes the quality of life they hope to achieve for themselves and their families, based on the forms of production available to them and what they want their future landscape to look like.

Cathy Roth, an Extension faculty member from the Berkshire region of Massachusetts commented that, "By using the model, people learned that they can make decisions based on what's important to them. The people in this workshop were able to really see how values and goals could drive decisions." Some of the NRCS employees who attended could see the possibilities of HRM being useful as they work with farmers. Heidi Smith from Dover, New Hampshire hopes to use HRM as she works on conservation plans with farmers.

Some participants challenged the value of the process relative to existing methods. There was considerable discussion about this issue. HRM trainers emphasized, however, that new and more comprehensive methods were needed to deal with the economic, environmental, and community pressures that farmers in New England face.

FSA district director Bruce Lake from Woodsville, New Hampshire agreed. Lake stated, "It was refreshing to learn about this HRM process and see its potential for agriculture. To me, this is what sustainable agriculture is all about. . .and learning about HRM helps me break down old barriers and limitations to see the whole picture and helps guide me in a more positive, productive direction."



FOCUS ON RESEARCH

This issue of **Cultivating Connections** marks the beginning of a column we plan to include as a regular segment in this newsletter: **Focus on Research**. We will look at innovative research projects conducted in Vermont that aim to enhance agriculture in the state and beyond.

The Road to Developing Greenhouse Biocontrols

he UVM Entomology Research Laboratory is an international leader in research for management of pear thrips, a pest that surfaced as a serious defoliator of Vermont maple stands in 1988. The research team, composed of entomologists Bruce Parker and Margaret Skinner, insect pathologist Michael Brownbridge, and a handful of lab technicians and graduate students, work closely to study entomopathogenic or insect-killing fungi as a pest management tool. These fungi, originally found by the team in Vermont forests, attack and kill select insects including pear thrips.

Fungi as Greenhouse Control

The team has since expanded its research to investigate the use of entomopathogenic fungi to combat two major greenhouse pests: western flower thrips and sweet potato or silver leaf whitefly. These insects attack greenhouse-grown ornamental and vegetable crops in the northeast, but are of world-wide significance on a wide range of economically important crops. The team focused on greenhouse pests for a couple of reasons. Currently, there are few reliable controls for greenhouse insects except synthetic insecticides, and many greenhouse producers rely heavily on these pesticides. In fact, the greenhouse industry is currently the largest user of pesticides in U.S. agriculture in terms of active ingredient per acre. The threat of pest resistance to these chemicals, and concerns about environmental quality and worker safety lead the team to search for an alternative pest management tool that is safe and effective. Although there are many "beneficial" insects (predators and parasitoids) available for use "under glass," these insects are often pest-specific and can be difficult to manage effectively.

"Some of these beneficials do not provide reliable control throughout the year," said Michael Brownbridge, "and there are often problems related to quality control of shipments which critically affect their performance."

The team also believes that the information they generate in their research can be utilized beyond Vermont and even internationally, as many large greenhouse producers are located throughout Europe.

Their ultimate goal is to find a way to fit the fungal control method into current greenhouse production systems, be they conventional, chemical-intensive management systems or ones which use a variety of "alternative" controls like predacious insects. "There is no such thing as a 'silver bullet' in insect control," stated Brownbridge, "It is becoming increasingly clear that no single strategy is going to solve all greenhouse problems. We must look at a total approach to pest management not just our one component."

Research Takes Time



The team has identified several effective fungal strains to control each greenhouse pest and is presently evaluating these for control of whitefly on poinsettia plants and thrips on chrysanthemum. The road to developing the fungi as a pest management tool is complex and challenging. "Our research is

a long-term process," said Bruce Parker, the research team's leader. "We needed to answer some very basic questions about the pests before even thinking about how to develop a control for them." The team is studying the life cycles of the greenhouse pests to determine population thresholds and when, in their development, they might be most susceptible to the fungi.

"In order to deliver an effective pest management tool, we must first research all variables involved," said Margaret Skinner, "and the number of variables we are dealing with is astounding." In order to determine the optimal way to use fungi in a pest management strategy, the team is looking at several aspects. They will examine how best to target fungal preparations against the insects. They need to find out which method of formulating the fungi works best against the target pests--for example, fungi can be formulated as wettable powders, in oil, or as granules--and at how dose rate (and hence the amount of material required to control the pests) affects performance, and how temperature affects efficiency of the fungi. In addition, the team is looking at the impact of different spray equipment on efficacy.

They are also investigating how compatible the fungi are with other pest management strategies, both chemical and biological, to determine how the different control tactics can be used together in an integrated pest management approach.

"Coming up with solutions takes time," said Parker, "and we feel it is important to communicate our results with the industry at each step along the way." During this phase of their research, the team is soliciting input from greenhouse operators to help them gain an understanding of management issues. "Research does not happen in a vacuum," said Margaret Skinner. "In order to have an effective, usable end product, we must include the industry." Tom Doubleday, head grower of Claussen's Greenhouse, one of the largest greenhouse operators in the state, serves as a liaison between greenhouse growers and the research team. In addition, the team has formed a regional advisory group, made up of growers, extension specialists, and researchers, to help them better identify growers' needs and implementation of new management strategies.

Team Approach is Key

All three researchers agree that a team approach is key to the success of their research. The complexity of the research requires an interdisciplinary approach.

"Everything is inter-related," said Margaret Skinner. "To understand and enhance the efficacy of the fungus, we must understand the biology of the target insect, so entomologists and insect pathologists must work closely to put together the pieces of the puzzle."

Thrips and whiteflies continue to account for major economic losses in the greenhouse industry. Chemical control options are decreasing as a result of resistance and increased restrictions on chemical pesticide use. Consumer pressures to have "chemical free" plants are also fueling the need to look beyond the single chemical component pest management approach.

Entomopathogenic fungi may not totally replace chemical insecticides, but their use will ultimately contribute to minimizing chemical inputs in greenhouse production. Results from the research at the Entomology Lab indicate that insect pathogenic fungi show great promise for use in a biorational IPM program, and will promote more sustainable, cost-effective management strategies that are safer for humans and the environment.



K-12 SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE EDUCATION

Institute Sows Seeds of Understanding and Educational Change



by David Rogers

David is a lecturer in the Department of Animal and Food Sciences at the University of Vermont and co-organizer of the UVM Agroecology Institute.

he second UVM Agroecology Institute for high school teachers and students was held this summer from July 9-15. Twenty high school students and twelve high school science, math, and social studies teachers from all over Vermont spent a week living on campus and investigating important ecological and social aspects of food production, marketing and consumption. The institute, a project of the Center; is designed to increase Vermonters' awareness and understanding of the food system.

It was a busy and diverse week of activity on the farm, in the field, laboratory, and community. Teachers and students worked in teams, analyzing their meals and food purchasing decisions. They studied plant and soil relationships, investigated IPM techniques, were introduced to innovative composting technologies, and conducted surveys of Burlington food programs. They discussed food preferences in other cultures, sustainability of ocean fishstocks, and the importance of developing and supporting local food systems. Over twenty faculty and staff in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences were involved in developing and delivering the institute.

A major goal of the institute is to stimulate and support Vermont high school teachers and school systems in developing new curricula and teaching methods using the food system as a central theme. In the weeks following the institute, most of the teachers created new units and curriculum initiatives using a variety of ideas, content, and teaching methods featured at the institute.

-For example, Lisa Davidson of Mill River High School in North Clarendon, Vermont returned from the institute to plan a school-wide cafeteria composting project with her environmental science students. At the Putney School, Lisa

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Sustainable Agriculture Calendar of Events

All events are held in Vermont unless otherwise indicated.

Date	Event	Place	Contact
October 14	Connecticut River Valley Grazing Conference	Bradford	Jean Conklin, (603) 787-6944
October 18	PMOP ¹ Pasture Walk: Butterworks Farm	Westfield	Joshua Silman, 656-0641
October 18, 21	Herbs and Winter Health: The Herbal Approach to Building and Maintaining Winter Wellness	Hinesburg	Barbara Nordozzi, 482-3500
October 19	Sustainable Rural Community Development Seminar: The New England Experience	Burlington	Nancy Koenig, 656-1018
October 21	Cattle Sale	E. Middlebury	Allen Hitchcock, 763-2319
October 21- November 11	Women's Ag. Network <i>Growing Places</i> Course	Berlin	WAgN Office, 656-3276
October 23-25	Generating Wealth from the Land HRM Course	Hyde Park	Joshua Silman, 656-0641
October 26	RFFVRP Rural Health & Safety Conference	Colchester	Kathy Mason, 773-3349
October 26-28	National Agrability Project Workshop	Burlington	Kathy Mason, 773-3349
October 27	Vermont's Troubled Waters: Issues and Opportunities for Community Action	Montpelier	Christine Negra, 223-2328
October 27-28	Growing Home: An Introduction to Permaculture Design & Bioregional Living	Brinkhaven, Ohio	Bill Wealand, (800) 282-0740
October 28	Education for a Green World: Integrating the Environment and School Curriculum for the 21st Century	Rutland	Vermont Academy of Arts and Sciences, 235-2302
November 2	SNR Seminar Series: ² Institutional Racism in Natural Resources	Burlington	UVM School of Natural Resources, 656-8683

The Center for Sustainable Agriculture at the University of Vermont and State Agricultural College 590 Main Street, Burlington, Vermont 05405-0059

Date	Event	Place	Contact
November 3, 10, 17	Agricultural Financial Management Course	White River Junction	Rick Wackernagel, 656-1020
November 4-5	Farmer to Farmer Conference	Bar Harbor, ME	Maine Organic Farmers & Gardeners Association, (207) 622-3118
November 5-8	North American Symposium: Linkages among Farming Systems & Communities	Ames, lowa	Sue Jarnagin, (515) 292-6802
November 8-9	1995 Income Tax School	Colchester	Chuck Bigalow, 656-1021
November 11	Conifers Workshop	South Burlington	Friends of the Hort. Farm, 864-3073
November 13, 20, 27	Agricultural Financial Management Course	Newport	Rick Wackernagel, 656-1020
November 14, 21, 29	Agricultural Financial Management Course	Rutland	Rick Wackernagel, 656-1020
November 15-16	1995 Income Tax School	White River Junction	Chuck Bigalow, 656-1021
November 15, 22, 29	Agricultural Financial Management Course	Montpelier	Rick Wackernagel, 656-1020
November 16	SNR Seminar Series: Native American Perspective on Natural Resources Management	Burlington	UVM School of Natural Resources, 656-8683
November 16-17	"Environmental Enhancement through Agriculture" Conference	Boston, MA	William Lockeretz, (617) 627-3223
November 10-12	10th Annual Sustainable Agriculture Conference	Black Mountain, NC	Marjorie Bender, (919) 968-1030
December 12-14	New England Vegetable and Berry Conference and Trade Show	Sturbridge, MA	Vern Grubinger, 257-7967
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¹PMOP. The UVM Pasture Management Outreach Program

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²SNR Seminar Series. The UVM School of Natural Resources seminar series. This year series focuses on appreciating diversity in natural resources.

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The Sustainable Agriculture Calendar of Events is published quarterly by the Center for Sustainable Agriculture at the University of Vermont and State Agricultural College, 590 Main Street, Burlington, Vermont 05405-0059. If you would like to post an event, please contact Debra Heleba at (802) 656-0233.

Holderness developed food and consumer surveys for use in her rural studies class. These and other initiatives are being implemented in Vermont high school science and social studies classes this fall. Institute staff will be available throughout the year to help teachers locate technical information, faculty, and resource people, and to provide other resources needed to successfully implement and further develop institute-related teaching and learning.

By any measure, this year's Agroecology Institute was a great success. Without exception, participants found the week to be personally rewarding and valuable, "a real consciousness-raiser." As participant Alyson Mahony, social studies teacher at Chelsea Public School, put it, "The connections between saving farmlands and small farms, feeding the poor, restoring damaged soil and clean water, and living sustainably world-wide seem obvious after a week at the Agroecology Institute. At this point, it seems vital for institutes and programs like this to be offered around the world." We heartily agree and hope to secure funding to support continued development and delivery of the Agroecology Institute next year. . . and beyond.

For more information about the institute, contact Elizabeth Seyler.

The 1995 Agroecology Institute was funded by grants from the Vermont Institute for Science, Math and Technology; the Vermont Department of Education Higher Education Program; the American Agriculturist Foundation, Ltd.; the ES-USDA Renewable Resources Extension Act; and the Windham Foundation.

FARM PROFILE

The Farm Between

ohn and Nancy Hayden operate The Farm Between, on Route 15 in Jeffersonville, Vermont. On 18 acres, they raise poultry, pork, lamb, organic vegetables and berries. They try to use production practices that build and maintain healthy soils and marketing strategies that create strong links with the local community.

Through a "client membership" program, people can order locally grown animal products ahead of time. Currently, 22 families sign up annually for lamb, pork, chicken, turkey and/or horticultural products by making a \$50 deposit by the first of May. The deposit goes toward production costs. Membership is not required to place an order, but it guarantees receipt of items that are in limited supply and entitles the member to a 5% discount on produce.



John notes that his prices for poultry are quite a bit higher than ones found in the supermarket but, "there's no comparison in terms of quality of flavor

and texture of our pasture-fed birds." The labor-intensive nature of poultry pasturing requires the price premium. "People who buy our birds know that we raise them in uncrowded and humane conditions, which are quite different from how conventional birds are reared in factory-like situations." Their grass-finished lambs and fresh pork also have that home-grown quality, but the prices are more comparable to conventional ones because the labor inputs are lower.

John slaughters all the poultry in a converted milkhouse--about 500 chickens and 120 turkeys this year. The state allows up to 1,000 birds of each species to be sold directly from the farm. While there is no official inspection requirement in his case, John invited the state meat inspector out from the Vermont Department of Agriculture to look things over.

The Haydens have been pasturing poultry for 3 years, and John feels it works well to convert grass into a marketable product. It also leaves the soil well-manured for following vegetable crops like pumpkins. The pasturing pens are 10×14 -foot hoop houses made from 1" PVC tubing attached to pressure-treated skids. The top of the tubing is covered with plastic and chicken wire is attached around the sides. Used lumber tarps laid over the plastic provide shade. Two pairs of lawnmower wheels rigged together are placed under the frame, enabling one person to move the hoop houses to fresh pasture.

In addition to memberships and local restaurant sales, this year a retail stand was opened on the farm. In 1996, it will be open from strawberry season until mid-October. The farm stand is part of an informal partnership with David Marchant, who farms in Fairfax, about 8 miles west of Jeffersonville along the Lamoille River. He provides the strawberries, lettuce, tomatoes, sweet corn, melons, and other "big ticket" items. John and Nancy raise the "odds and ends," like flowers, herbs, cherry tomatoes and raspberries.

John's varied professional experiences have provided a strong base for his innovative farming and marketing approaches. He earned a Master's degree in entomology from Michigan State University, was in the Peace Corps in Mali, West Africa, and worked in pest management and water quality extension positions before coming to Vermont in 1992. He is currently a member of the Vermont Vegetable and Berry Growers' Association and Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT), and he serves as assistant director for the Lamoille County Conservation District.

This summer, extension agents from around the northeast visited The Farm Between during a pasture management training--part of a one-week program organized by Dr. Bill Murphy of the UVM Plant and Soil Science Department with funding from the USDA SARE (Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education) Extension Training Program. John also led a NOFA-VT workshop on pastured poultry at the farm this summer. "Farming is a lifestyle choice," said John, and he admits he that couldn't do it without his wife's off-farm job. While he is satisfied with his income, it is not enough to pay the mortgage by itself. John and Nancy realize that they have a good location for marketing, and they will continue to explore other agriculturally based enterprises that may increase their on-farm income. To contact them, write: The Farm Between, RR 1 Box 32, Jeffersonville, VT; or phone (802) 644-8332.

RESOURCES ABOUND!

Vermont Commodity Associations

Producer groups can be a great source of information on production and marketing, and provide wonderful opportunities for networking. In this issue of *Resources Abound!*, we have listed just some of the commodity associations in Vermont. In the issues to follow, we will list other organizations that support Vermont farms.

Champlain Valley Holstein Club Robin Forrest Box 157-A Shoreham, VT 05770 (802) 897-2258

Champlain Valley Rabbit Breeders Association Robert Bennett 1 Governor's Lane Shelburne, VT 05482 (802) 985-8597

Green Mountain Horse Association Jody Schultz P.O. Box 8 South Woodstock, VT 05071 (802) 457-1509

Green Mountain Rabbit Breeders Association Arlene Jones 98 Park Street Rutland, VT 05701 (802) 773-3208

New Hampshire-Vermont Christmas Tree Association Pamela Dwyer RR 1, Box 470 Wolcott, VT 05680 (802) 888-7255 Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT) Kirsten Novak Bower P.O. Box 697 Richmond, VT 05477 (802) 434-4122

Vermont Angus Association, Inc. Dana Emmons RR 1, Box 38 Woodstock, VT 05091 (802) 457-1478

Vermont Aquaculture Association Shirley Coleman Green Mountain Trout Farm RFD Bristol, VT 05443 (802) 453-4488

Vermont Association of Professional Horticulturalists Jane Wilkening P.O. Box 24 Underhill, VT 05489 (802) 899-3361

Vermont Ayrshire Club, Inc. Arlene Conant RR 1, Box 511 Randolph Center, VT 05061 (802) 728-5283 Vermont Beef Producers Association Allen Hitchcock 1329 Furnace Rd. Pittsford, VT 05763 (802) 483-2319

Vermont Beekeepers Association Jim Abair 9465 Loomis Hill Road Waterbury Center, VT 05677 (802) 244-8106

Vermont Cut Flower Council Lindsey Ketchell Vermont Dept. of Ag., Food & Markets 116 State Street, Drawer 20 Vermont, 05620-2901 (802) 828-3833

Vermont Dairy Herd Improvement Association, Inc. Bob Albrecht, General Manager 3 Gilman Office Center White River Junction, VT 05001 (802) 295-3379

Vermont Dairy Shepherd's Association Cynthia Major RFD 3, Box 265 Putney, VT 05346 (802) 387-4473

	Vermont Maple Sugarmaker's	Vermont Tree Fruit Growers'
ssociation	Association, Inc.	Association
ec. Jackie Folsom	Sec. Sandra Tarrier	Sec. Hans Dietsch
Box 2930	RR1, Box 3500	P.O. Box 54, Hanley Lane
Cabot, VT 05647	Westford, VT 05494	Jericho, VT 05465
802) 426-3579	(802) 878-8935	(802) 899-2085
ermont Holstein Association	Vermont Morgan Horse Association,	Vermont Turkey Growers Association
ec. Donna Holmes	Inc.	Dave Adams
9 Weed Road	Sec. Richard Kaufman	Adams Turkey Farm
ssex Junction, VT 05452	RFD 1, Box 3118	Box 1220
802) 878-3044	Mendon, VT 05701	Westford, VT 05494
······································	(802) 775-3424	(802) 828-4726
ermont Jersey Breeders' Association	Vorment Poultry Association	Verment Verstable and Permy Crews
ec. Heather Brigham D 2, Box 425	Vermont Poultry Association Sec. Jackie Devoid	Vermont Vegetable and Berry Grower Association
L Albans, VT 05478	RR 1, Box 365	Sec./Tres. Jon Turmel
802) 527-0611	Salisbury, VT 05769	VT Dept. of Agr., Food & Markets
502) 527-0011	(802) 352-4241	116 State Street, Drawer 20
ermont Llama and Alpaca Association	(002) 552-4241	Vermont, 05620-2901
usan Houston	Vermont Sheep Breeders' Association	(802) 828-2431
1aple Leaf Llama Farm	Exec. Sec. Tom Bennet	
raftsbury Common, VT 05827	HC 32, Box 8	
802) 586-2873	Calais, VT 05648	
, , ,	(802) 229-4020	
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