

What is the Role of the Kentucky Department of Agriculture?

By Agriculture Commissioner Ryan F. Quarles, March 2016

Most Kentuckians know about Kentucky Proud, and you may be aware of the Kentucky Department of Agriculture's duties and services for the state's agriculture industry. But most of the department's responsibilities are to protect consumers and regulate industries. To commemorate National Agriculture Day, I'd like to tell you about all the things the Kentucky Department of Agriculture does for you.

When you buy an article of food or merchandise at any retail store, the department has been there to test the price scanners for accuracy, so the price on the item is the price you pay. When you weigh produce at the grocery or farmers' market, department employees have calibrated the scale to ensure that it reads correctly. When you fill your vehicle with gasoline or diesel, a lab under contract with the KDA has tested the fuel for octane level and impurities, and department inspectors have checked the pump to make sure you get what you pay for.

Among other things, the department also:

- Inspects amusement rides to make sure they are functioning properly and assembled according to the manufacturer's specifications;
- Inspects random samples of eggs, and licenses businesses that sell eggs;
- Regulates the sale, distribution, and use of pesticides in Kentucky, licenses pest control companies and applicators, and registers pesticide products that are sold and/or distributed in Kentucky; and
- Sprays for mosquitoes at the request of local officials.

These and other consumer services affect every Kentuckian every day. Of course, we also provide a vast array of services to Kentucky farmers and food producers.

The department is best known for Kentucky Proud, the official state farm marketing program. Kentucky Proud stands for local products produced by farm families and small businesses right here in the

Commonwealth. Kentucky Proud helps producers get their products on retail shelves and in restaurants, farmers' markets, schools, colleges, universities, and state parks, enabling them to generate sales and income.

The Office of the State Veterinarian protects Kentucky's livestock herd from animal diseases and eradicates outbreaks when they occur. OSV staff works major equine and livestock events such as the Kentucky Derby and Oaks, the Breeders' Cup, the 2010 Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games, the North American International Livestock Exposition, and the Kentucky State Fair. The OSV collaborates with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, its counterparts in other states, and private veterinary practitioners to help farmers protect their investment.

The Division of Show and Fair Promotion works the Kentucky State Fair and local livestock shows, and provides aid to county fairs. The Division of Agriculture Education and Outreach teaches Kentucky youth about the importance of agriculture in their everyday lives, gives farm safety demonstrations to schools and civic groups, and accepts agricultural conservation easements to protect farmland from encroaching development. The Division of Food Distribution administers USDA food programs in Kentucky and manages the Farm to School Program, a national model in helping schools get local foods to serve to their students and staff. The KDA provides a wide variety of other services for every type of farmer – large or small, crop or livestock, conventional or organic.

On National Agriculture Day, I hope you'll join me in saluting the Kentucky Department of Agriculture employees whose work



enables us to enjoy the greatest standard of living in the world.

Questions

1. What is the main idea of this article?
2. What are three things that the Kentucky Department of Agriculture regulate for consumers?
3. What could be a consequence if fuel pumps are not accurate?
4. How does the Kentucky Proud program help farmers?
5. What Kentucky Department of Agriculture division and program works to get local foods into schools.
6. Based on the information in this editorial, write a marketing slogan for the Kentucky Department of Agriculture.