



# Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

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## **Maryland House Environment & Transportation Committee Tours Frederick and Carroll County Farms**

DAVIDSONVILLE, MD (September 2, 2015) – On Monday, August 31, 2015, the House Environment & Transportation Committee toured three working farms in Frederick and Carroll County. Maryland Farm Bureau and the Maryland Department of Agriculture worked together to show the legislators how diverse agriculture is in Maryland.

“Giving the legislators a behind the scenes visit of the working family farms helps them to better understand the rewards as well as challenges of farming in Maryland,” said Maryland Farm Bureau President Chuck Fry. “We were happy to be able to assist with the selections of the farms toured and to participate in the tours throughout the day.”

The first stop on the tour was Coldsprings Farm, a 1,000 cow dairy farm in Carroll County owned by Matt Hoff. The group started with a bus tour of the dairy manure composting facility along with the manure storage area. Coldsprings Farm prides itself in being able to effectively handle and distribute manure in a way that creates maximum yield of the crops they grow for feed while preventing excess fertilizer from making its way to the streams and ultimately the Bay. However, they have been limited on the ability to build an electricity generation facility that would utilize the methane produced by processing the manure. The farm is limited to producing only 200 percent of the amount of electricity that the farm uses. The farm could produce substantially more electricity if all of the farm’s manure could be processed and all of the methane be utilized.

The second stop on the tour was Black Ankle Vineyard, a Frederick County winery owned by Ed Boyce and Sara O’Herron. Because this is harvest season for vineyards, the group was able to see the processing of the grapes while getting a better understanding of what goes on when making wine. The group ended the tour with a wine tasting and lunch out in the sitting area at the farm’s tasting room. One of the main issues that the group was able to see firsthand was the effect of Japanese Beetles on the grape vines.

“The leaves serve as the vine’s small solar panels that capture the sun’s light and energy and turns it into the sugar in the grapes,” said O’Herron. “The Japanese Beetles eat the leaves and prevent the vines from capturing the sun’s energy.”

To control the beetles, Black Ankle Vineyard uses a neonicotinoid pesticide, as it is one of the only products that are effective on the beetles. O’Herron assured the group that the pesticide was

only used when the beetles attacked the vines, which didn't start until July this year. The bees in the area were not affected because July is after the flowering period.

The last stop of the day was at Shamrock Farm, a Carroll County Thoroughbred racehorse breeding farm owned by the Rooney family and managed by Jim and Christie Steele. The 640 acre horse farm is well known for breeding high performing and successful racehorses not only in Maryland, but around the country. The group was able to see some of the farm's sires and better understand the inner workings of this horse breeding facility. The group saw many of the 100 mares and their babies grazing the pastures.

"Horses are livestock not companion animals," said Mr. Steele. "They utilize the hay and straw grown in this area and are a large part of Maryland's agriculture industry."

Mr. Steele discussed the value of the Video Lottery Funds that go toward increasing the purses at Maryland horseraces for horses born and bred in Maryland. "This program has helped revitalize the racehorse industry in Maryland," added Steele.

As a grassroots organization, Maryland Farm Bureau is happy to assist legislators in contacting Maryland farmers. This type of farm tour fits the mission of Maryland Farm Bureau: To promote and protect Maryland agriculture and rural life.

"We hope this quick look into the world of local farms helps our elected representatives better understand the importance of agriculture in Maryland and its economic impact on this state," concluded Chuck Fry, Maryland Farm Bureau President.

For more information on the House Environment & Transportation Committee, visit <http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/webmga/frmMain.aspx?pid=cmtepage&tab=subject7&id=env&stab=01>. To view more photos from the farm tours, visit <https://www.flickr.com/photos/mdagdept/albums/72157657649553908>.

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Maryland Farm Bureau is a private, non-profit membership organization. It is controlled by its members through the democratic process and is financed by voluntary membership dues. Its strength comes from the active participation of over 36,000 member families that belong to the state's 23 county Farm Bureaus.