Day three (Friday) of our beef tour started at Harpers Farm, Seneca Rocks. Carol and Joe run Harper’s Old Country Store, one of the longest running businesses in the state. Joe owns the largest sheep flock (Hampshire, Suffolk, Dorsett crosses) in the state of West Virginia, running about 400 ewes. He purchases backgrounded calves he from ‘board’ sales sight unseen. The USDA grader and the sales barn owner go out to the farms to grade the calves. These calves and of the ewes graze the same mountaintop pastures. We rode up to the pastures on the bus then boarded wagons to nearly the top of Harper’s Mountain, about 3,200 ft. What a view! He does have some predation from wildlife, both bears and coyotes. They utilize guard dogs and donkeys for protection. The store front is pictured, right. We ate lunch at the Front Porch Restaurant.

Second stop was at the farm of Jim and Jamie Kinsey (pictured right with bred heifers), Kinsey’s Oak Front Farm in Flemington. Jamie and his dad run a beautiful herd of elite Angus. They have participated in the Wardensville Bull Test for 10 years. The first year they had their bulls rejected for the sale. This was Jim’s motivation to focus on improving the cowherd and not just bull selection. They now send around 20 bulls a year with some of the top bulls. The bull calves that don’t make the cut get cut! They sell about 60 or so steers in lots with a weight range of 100 lb or more; this is a little bit of a wide range, but works for the farm. Heifer calves are sold privately. Their best marketing tool is to have potential buyers come to the farm for a visit.

Retired extension agent, Ed Smolder got on the bus here to talk about the pooled sale he started 20 years ago. They have 20 producers that started with the pool and are still with it. One buyer told him it was a pond, not just a pool with that many participating farms! They are graded and sold in sorted lots.
Last stop of the day was at Beech Hill Farm, Phil and Becky Osborne. The land has been in Becky’s family since 1778 from an original land grant of 900 acres, and own about 350 acres now. Phil is retired from WVU extension and runs a unique heifer program. He started by buying pens of heifer calves 25 years ago that didn’t develop well. He now buys 2 heifers from any farm then sells them a bred heifer back, selling remaining heifers. This year, most farms want both heifers back to build their herds since prices are high.

We went for a wagon ride to the top of Phil’s farm while Becky and some of the neighbors fixed us a great picnic dinner, probably our last one for the season! We stood around a small campfire to end the evening getting to know our hosts and their friends.

Nancy Glazier, Small Farms Specialist, NWNY Dairy, Livestock Field Crops Team