Important Information

Business of Beef Classes, Thursdays in February (5–26), 6–9 p.m., North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Scotland County Center, Laurinburg - This class is a follow-up to the State Award winning Cattle 101 Class offered in 2008. A $25 fee will be charged. The class will conclude with a field trip on Saturday, February 28 (time to be announced).

Annual Awards and Recognition Banquet, Tuesday, February 10, 6:30 p.m., O. P. Owens Agriculture Center - This banquet, sponsored by North Carolina Cooperative Extension - Robeson County Center, Robeson County Crop Promotion Association, Cape Fear Farm Credit, and many other local agribusinesses, will feature a night of special awards. It is a time when we recognize those who have excelled in various areas of agriculture, those who have made significant contributions to promote and support agriculture in Robeson County, and our yield contest winners for the past year. You will not want to miss the special after-dinner speaker who will be with us. Please call 671-3276 by Monday, February 2, to reserve your seat and meal.

BQA Chute Side Demonstration, Tuesday, March 10, Southeastern Livestock Market, Chadbourn – Time to be announced.

Richmond County Wild Game Cook-Off - March 2009: Date and time TBA. It is a competition to see who can cook up the best recipe. The public gets to taste each dish after the judging is complete. Richmond County encourages surrounding counties to compete as well as taste. Now is the time to freeze any wild game that has been trapped or hunted by you or given to you by a friend. You can also freeze any plant material, nuts, or fruits that you have collected or been given. Happy Hunting and Gathering!

If you are interested in learning more about any information in this newsletter, contact me at the Extension Center at 671-3276 or E-mail me at Michelle_Shooter@ncsu.edu. For accommodations for persons with disabilities, contact me no later than five business days before the event.

Sincerely,

Michelle M. Shooter
Extension Agent
Agriculture - Livestock
MS/dh

632 copies of this public document were printed at a cost of $189.60 or $.30 per copy.
State General Permits

The State General Permits expire on September 30, 2009. The Division of Water Quality (DWQ) is in the process of developing the new permit. There were public meetings held in December to present the permits and allow for public comment. The final permit should be issued by March 2009. There is a fact sheet and links to the draft permits on DWQ’s website at:

http://h2o.enr.state.nc.us/aps/afou/downloads.htm

Some of the key differences are as follows:

- Phosphorous assessment may be required for facilities in watersheds sensitive to nutrient enrichment.
- Sludge applied to bare soils must be incorporated within 2 days or prior to the next rainfall event - whichever is first.
- Routine inspections after 1-inch rainfall shall include visual inspection of drain outlets, ditches, and drainage ways for any discharge of waste.
- No application of waste if Hurricane or Tropical Storm Warning or Flood Watch associated with a tropical system is issued for the county in which the facility is located. This is a requirement to stop applications 24 hours in advance of a tropical system.
- Sludge levels must be in compliance within 2 years.

2008 Agricultural Water Use Survey

N.C. farmers have the opportunity to document agricultural water use, based on recent legislation passed in response to the ongoing drought. The survey is important because water use information is limited, agricultural water use facts will inform policy makers, and farms will document their water use needs to ensure future access. Individual farm data will be kept strictly confidential by law. Surveys will be sent in January and the results will be available by July 1, 2009.

Forage Management Tips

From Production of Pastures and Forages in North Carolina

**January**

- If winter pasture is limited, feed hay in the pasture or allow cows to graze every other day. The priority for limited pasture is: (1) calves by creep grazing, (2) stockers, (3) nursing cows, and (4) dry cows.
- Winter annual pastures that were planted on a prepared seedbed may be severely damaged if animals trample on them during wet periods. Allow calves first priority to these high-quality annual pastures.
- Sample hay and send to NCDA lab for analysis.
- Determine animal feed requirements for the year (about 6 tons hay equivalent/cow-calf pair) and outline a 12-month forage production plan and use plan to meet the needs.

**February**

- Apply nitrogen to cool-season grasses to stimulate early spring growth.
- Lime fields that will be prepared for spring plants.
- Locate sources of hybrid bermudagrass sprigs for planting next month.
- Burn warm-season grass residues in late February or early March.
- Get herbicide sprayers ready to control weeds in dormant bermudagrass fields.
Dividing Pastures Into Paddocks – Rotational Grazing

Why should you divide paddocks into pastures? With one pasture, livestock are free to graze whenever and wherever they want. Pasture management is left to the animals’ good judgment. While a cow may be very good at being a cow, she is not a reliable pasture manager for long-term pasture health.

The most common argument for rotational grazing is allowing pastures to rest. When animals have the opportunity to go somewhere else, plants have the opportunity to grow new leaves. As the leaves grow, more photosynthesis takes place, and overall energy status of the plant improves. Root growth is renewed, and the plant becomes more robust.

Some plants are more grazing tolerant than others and require little rest. These species have a lot of leaves close to the ground. Other species require more rest, because they have fewer leaves closer to the ground. These are the sorts of things that determine how long a pasture needs to rest between grazings to stay healthy.

For a commercial cow-calf operation given a goal of increasing conception and weaning rates through better pasture quality, a simple solution is subdividing pastures into eight paddocks. This allows animals enough rotation to consistently keep red clover in the pasture. Having a legume in a grass pasture can add 30 to 100 pounds weaning weight and increase conception rate. If the same operation decided they want to graze all year and feed no hay, then the subdivision required increases substantially. There needs to be a number of paddocks rested in late summer and fall to allow stockpiling for winter forage, and the length of the grazing period in winter must be shortened. The year-round grazing scenario may require more than 20 paddocks. Movable electric fencing provides greater flexibility in managing paddock size and numbers.

Soil Compaction
Grazing pastures on certain soil types in wet conditions can result in severe soil compaction. Many fear grazing pastures during droughts, but unless the soil is completely stripped and it blows away, the damage to soil by grazing when dry is very minimal. Pastures recover quickly when rain finally comes following a drought. The same soil and pasture may not recover for years if grazed too wet. Grazing when too wet collapses pore structure in the soil leading to reduction of water infiltration and holding capacity as well as oxygen holding capacity. Root growth is also reduced.

Cows rotationally grazed maintain a steady rate of three to five miles per day, while the continuously grazed cattle increased their travel distance eight to ten miles. Increased travel distance translates directly to increased hoof beats and increased physical force exerted on the soil. On a farm with variable soil types, plan the grazing season to concentrate use on sandy or loamier soils when it is wet and avoid heavy clay soils. Shorten grazing periods during wet periods to reduce total hoof impact on the soil.

Soil Fertility
Fertilizer added to crops, such as corn, leaves the farm with the product. Animals grazing on pastures are different; animals return over 90 percent of the nutrients they consume back to the soil through their urine and feces. Phosphorus (P) and potassium (K) applied one time can keep working for many years with the right grazing management. Understanding patterns of consumption and excretion is an important tool to manage nutrient cycling on farms and ranches.

Not all minerals flow the same pathway within the animal. Almost all P passes through the feces while most K flows through the urinary system. This results in different patterns of redistribution within a pasture, because livestock do not defecate and urinate simultaneously.

When the animal’s diet is near a required protein level, excreted nitrogen (N) will be evenly distributed between urine and feces. The form of N in urine is almost immediately available for plant uptake, while N in feces is in more complex organic forms and is released slowly over time. The N fertilizer equivalent in a urine spot in a high protein pasture can be in excess of 100 pounds of N per acre!
Shade, water, and supplemental feeding sites are manure magnets. Greater travel distances between water encourage herd behavior and cause the herd to stay longer at the watering point, overloading the area with urine and feces. Having the watering sites, mineral sites, and shade areas strategically placed away from each other in various parts of the pasture allows for the animals to excrete less feces and urine in one general location.

**Basics of Fertilization**

Fertility should be divided into four categories: lime and soil pH, P and K, N, and micronutrients. The most productive pastures tend to have near neutral soils. Liming almost always pays. Neutralizing the pH produces a better balance of essential minerals. Lime is the first step in rebuilding damaged soils. All energy transformation in plants is P dependent, which is why it’s so important.

**Arthrogryposis Mutliplex or Curly Calf Syndrome**

Becky Spearman compiled from articles from the American Angus Association

There has been a lot of talk of the Curly Calf Syndrome in the Angus breed in the last few months. The American Angus Association (AAA) has several memos on their website (www.angus.org) that deal with this issue. The gene that causes the defect appears to be a recessive gene. Genetic defects cause an abnormal function in the animal due to an abnormal or mutated gene. The AAA currently recognizes six genetic defects including Arthrogryposis Mutliplex (AM) or Curly Calf Syndrome. According to Dr. David Steffen, veterinarian from the University of Nebraska, “Arthrogryposis Mutliplex (curly calf) calves are born dead or die shortly after birth. The spine and legs appear crooked or twisted, and the joints of the legs are often fixed in positions. Front legs are contracted, and rear limbs may be contracted or extended. Calves are small and appear thin due to limited muscle development. There may be a cleft affecting the nose or palate.”

Dr. Jon Beever of the University of Illinois has been working to determine the gene that is causing the problem. He isolated the gene and developed a preliminary test to check which animals are carriers. There is a status list of 736 Angus AI sires. There are three possible genotypes:

- **AM-Free (AMF)** is homozygous and free of the mutation.
- **AM-Carrier (AMC)** is heterozygous or carries the mutation and can pass the mutation to half of their offspring.
- **AM-Affected (AMA)** is an affected animal.

They are homozygous for the mutation but would rarely be tested. In genetics, a calf gets a gene from both parents. An AMF dam mated to an AMF sire will result in AMF (free) offspring. None of their calves will have the mutation and they will not carry the mutation. An AMC (carrier) dam mated to an AMC sire will result in a 25 percent chance that the offspring will be AMF, a 50 percent chance that the offspring will be AMC, and a 25 percent chance that the offspring will be AMA (affected and probably born dead). An AMF animal mated to an AMC animal will result in no offspring being AMA, but will result in a 50 percent chance that the offspring are AMC.

In September of 2008, there was a tentative conclusion that AM appeared to most likely be caused by a simple recessive gene, traced at that time from a most recent common ancestor, GAR Precision 1680 (Registration No. 11520398). In November of 2008, an ancestor of 1680 was identified as a carrier, a maternal grandsire: Rito 9J9 of B156 7T26 (Registration No. 9682589). The phrase “the impacted genetics” currently refers to all animals with Rito 9J9 of B156 7T26 in their pedigrees. The GAR Precision 1680 bull is a very popular AI bull.

How does this impact a beef producer? This is a serious situation, but it can be managed. Commercial producers who are using Angus bulls will have a low chance of having calves born with the syndrome. However, there is a chance that heifer offspring could be carriers, so producers will want to check a future bull’s pedigree to make sure the bull is not a carrier also. For Angus breeders not using crossbreeding, a thorough review of the pedigrees will be needed. A test to check females is being developed. An AMF female will never produce an affected calf.
A group of 4-H'ers recently traveled many miles to celebrate the 4-H Sandhills Farm Credit Showmanship Circuit Banquet in Columbus County. The banquet was held at Southeastern Community College. The Columbus County staff had a great dinner prepared to celebrate the achievements of the 4-H'ers who completed the required livestock shows during the fall show season.

Participating in livestock shows takes a lot of time and dedication on the part of these 4-H members and a lot of patience on the part of the parents! Thanks to all the 4-H members, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, agents, brothers, sisters, and general supporters for all of their help and assistance throughout the season. These youth are the future of agriculture. We appreciate them for the promise they bring to continue to grow our food or to be advocates for others who do!

Bladen County had 4 participants: Meranda Dennis, Jeremy Beavers, Dillion Dennis, and Allen Monk. Hoke County had 5 participants: Matthew Acorn, Morgan Rockwell, Dixie Acorn, Johanna Carter, and Paige Harrelson. Richmond County had 16 participants: Savannah Chappell, Taylor Chappell, Abigail Hamilton, Brianna Hamilton, DeLani Reep, Madelyn Chappell, Jordan Carroll, Christin Deese, Elizabeth Deese, Sarah Maske, Ryan McInnis, Trey McInnis, Grayson McQueen, Abby Allen, Michael Ezzell, and Nathan Ezzell. If you have any children, grandchildren, or neighbors who would like to show next year, please call your Extension Agent. Most clubs meet all year.

### 2008 Circuit Winners

#### Richmond County
- **Cloverbud Meat Goats**
  - Savannah Chappell
  - Taylor Chappell
  - Abigail Hamilton
  - Brianna Hamilton
  - DeLani Reep

- **Junior Meat Goats**
  1. Christin Deese
  2. Jordan Carroll
  3. Carly Blair Godwin
  4. Michaella McInnis
  5. Bethany Thompson

- **Junior Intermediate Meat Goats**
  1. Ryan McInnis
  2. Elizabeth Deese
  3. Morgan Rockwell
  4. Grayson McQueen
  5. Theresa Fehlman

- **Junior Market Lambs**
  1. Drayton Hancock
  2. Eugenie Vorder Bruggae
  3. Bobby Seals
  4. Ashley Wilson
  5. Isabella Love

- **Junior Intermediate Market Lambs**
  1. Ruth Vorder Bruggae
  2. Martha Vorder Bruggae
  3. Samantha Naylor
  4. Olivia Forbes
  5. Stephen Bordeaux

- **Senior Meat Goats**
  1. Nathan Ezzell
  2. Paige Harrelson
  3. Joanna Carter
  4. Michael Ezzell
  5. Abby Allen

- **Senior Market Lambs**
  1. Heather Goodrich
  2. Jamie Bordeaux
  3. Danielle Hunt

- **Senior Beef Heifers**
  1. Katie Pesta
  2. Sarah Herring (tie)
  3. Nick Kiker (tie)
  4. Dixie Acorn

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Photos:

- Bladen County Participants
- Richmond County Participants
- Hoke County Participants
There are several preparations that you can do on your farm before the newborn kids start arriving. The first thing to think about is getting the doe ready. You can give her vaccinations and shots 30 days prior to kidding. It is a good idea to give her 2 cc of Clostridium perfringens CD and Tetanus toxoid combination and 1 cc per 40 pounds of Vitamin E and Selenium. Always make sure to follow the label! Fifteen days before kidding, the doe needs to start receiving a ration of 1/2 cup of goat feed gradually increasing to 2 cups per day. When the doe starts milking, you can help her by feeding grain at 1 pound per day plus 1/2 pound for every pound of milk produced.

Kids are born worm- and coccidia-free. They start ingesting them after birth from their environment, such as from the doe’s feces, the ground, and pastures. We have had a particularly rough worm season this summer, and lots of does have a higher worm load than they usually do going into kidding season. That is why it is important to deworm the doe a few weeks before her due date with a dewormer that is safe for pregnant does. It will also help the kids if the doe is eating a feed with a coccidiostat in it to prevent them from ingesting a lot of coccidia eggs. It will be effective to deworm kids when they are 1 month of age, because that is when they will start to eat solid food. You can also give them feed containing a coccidiostat at this time. You can help to prevent kids from getting coccidiosis by keeping their pens and bedding clean and dry, keeping water fresh, and by not crowding areas with too many goats.

You can clip the hair around the doe’s tail and vent, down her back legs, and under her belly to be more sanitary. Start preparing a kidding pen with clean, dry straw. After the kid is a few days old, you can switch to shavings, but straw is better for kidding so that shavings don’t stick to the baby while the doe is trying to clean it up. It is important to understand the signs of labor in does so that you can be prepared. It is recommended to isolate her on the early due date, which is around 145 days gestation. This is where good breeding records come in handy. Does usually kid in late afternoon or early evening. These are good times to check on her. The early signs of labor include: restlessness, smelling the ground, pawing at bedding, looking behind her, lifting tail, rising and lying down frequently, increased urination, udder fills up, vulva becomes flabby, and a white discharge appears.

A doe may show all these signs or only a few of them. During the delivery, you can wash the genital area with udder wash, remove water buckets so that babies don’t drown, and stay with the doe in case she needs assistance. The signs of final labor include: extensive discharge, strong labor pains about 2 minutes apart, ears stand out and lips curl, doe strains, a fluid-filled bubble may appear, water breaks, second bubble appears, and feet or nose will become visible. Does usually deliver with the head lying on the forefeet with the chin on the knees or with both rear legs in the birth canal first with the kid’s back facing up towards the does’ back. These positions are usually normal and won't require any assistance. Abnormal positions include: head first with only one foreleg forward, head first with no legs forward, breach position with rump and tail first, and feet first with head turned back. There are many more possible abnormal positions than there are normal positions.

Some important things that you may need in your kidding kit include: a bucket with warm water, disinfectant (for naval), old towels, ob sleeves, lubricant, bulb syringe, and a flashlight. To care for the kid, it is necessary to clear the newborn’s nose and mouth of any fluid. You can use a bulb syringe normally used for children to do this easily. Kids should try to stand within 15 minutes of birth. It’s a good idea to dip the naval with diluted iodine or nolvasan. Kids need 4 to 8 ounces of colostrum within the first 4 hours of birth. Kids acquire immunity to most diseases from their mother in utero and are protected for the first 30 days. After that, they need their own vaccinations. It is important to work on your herd-health program with your veterinarian and always read the label when giving medications or vaccinations.
Proper mortality management is a major concern for poultry and swine farmers. Approved methods for mortality disposal include: incineration, burial, rendering, composting with a permit, and other methods approved by the state veterinarian. Each method has benefits and disadvantages.

Composting animal mortalities is gaining more and more interest among poultry and swine farmers, primarily because of the cost of fuel for incineration. Composting, when done with proper management, is a good alternative to incineration. The biggest disadvantages to composting are the initial cost of construction and the need for a front-end loader. However, cost-share money may be available in your county to offset construction costs.

Three different types of composting methods are presently being used. These are static pile composting, forced air composting, and in-vessel composting. Again, each method has its own benefits and disadvantages. No matter which method you choose, composting has certain criteria that must be met for the process to work properly. Composting is the aerobic, or oxygen-requiring, decomposition of organic materials by microorganisms under controlled conditions. The criteria include: proper carbon to nitrogen ratio, proper moisture content, and oxygen.

The preferred carbon to nitrogen (C:N) ratio is 25-30:1. Poultry and swine carcasses have an average C:N ratio of around 5:1, so a carbon source will need to be mixed with the carcass to increase the C:N ratio. Carbon sources include such things as litter, shavings, sawdust, peanut hulls, and wheat straw. The preferred moisture content of compost is 50-60 percent. When composting carcasses, water may need to be added to the mix to reach the desired moisture content.

As mentioned earlier, composting is an aerobic process. Without oxygen, composting will not occur. In the forced air and in-vessel composting methods, oxygen is supplied in the process. In static pile composting, oxygen is present in the mix, but the aerobic microorganisms will eventually consume the oxygen. The depletion of oxygen can be determined by the use of a 36-inch probe thermometer as the composting process is monitored. The static pile will reach temperatures in the 130°F - 140°F range, and then the temperature will begin to drop. This is telling you the oxygen has been depleted. All that needs to be done to replenish the oxygen is to turn the compost pile and move it from one bin to another.

The state veterinarian also has certain criteria that must be met when composting. All composting sites require a permit issued by NCDA&CS. Applying for a permit is relatively simple but does require certain information. This information includes:

1. owner’s name, address, county, and phone number
2. exact farm location
3. N.C. Farm ID premises identification number for the facility
4. poultry/swine contract company involvement, if any
5. size and type of operation
6. a topographical site map of the area with distances from the facility to property boundaries, dwellings, outbuildings, roads, any free-flowing water, and other applicable information regarding the general topography within 500 feet of the proposed facility
7. a copy of the lease agreement, if the facility or the distribution of the final product is on leased property, including a signed statement by the lessor that they are aware and acceptable to such use of their property
8. a description of the facility design and operation

Composting must be done on concrete when using static pile or forced air methods. In-vessel composters must be on concrete if using cost-share money. Static pile and forced air compost bins must have a roof over the bins and utilize a 36-inch probe thermometer to monitor temperature. The temperature for any of the composting methods MUST reach a minimum temperature of 131°F within 5 days of filling the unit and remain at least 131°F for a minimum of 5 consecutive days to maintain the composting process and reduce pathogen load.
State statutes 106-403 and 143-215.10C and NCAC 52C.0102 have the following conditions and stipulations:

1. All North Carolina solid waste, air, water quality, and other applicable regulations must be met in siting and operation of the system.
2. Only poultry or swine are to be processed in this facility.
3. Mortality to be processed shall originate only from the identified premises and the finished product is used solely on agricultural operations owned, operated, or leased by the permittee.
4. The final product of the process must be stored, treated, and utilized in accordance with all federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and permit requirements. The final product shall not be sold.
5. Temperatures shall be within Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) guidelines to reach a minimum of 131°F within 5 days of filling the unit and remain at least 131°F for a minimum of 5 days.
6. Dead animals are not to be removed from composting until all flesh, internal organs, and other soft tissue are fully decomposed.
7. The proposed facility shall have the following minimum setback requirements:
   a. 100-foot buffer between all property lines and compost areas;
   b. 100-foot buffer between all wells and compost areas, except for monitoring wells; and
   c. 50-foot buffer between perennial streams/rivers and compost areas.
8. A copy of the permit, plans, and operational reports shall be maintained on site and be available upon request by NCDA&CS, Veterinary Division.
9. The facility and operational records shall be available for annual inspection by Veterinary Division personnel and shall be sent to the Division upon request.
10. Operational reports shall include temperature monitoring during the initial facility start-up and follow-up records that contain either 10 days/month or annual laboratory results of pathogen load testing.
11. An application for a permit modification shall be required for changes in facility ownership, an increase in facility capacity, or any other changes from the stipulations of this permit.
12. The Veterinary Division must be immediately notified of any complicating issues involving animal disease or environmental concerns.
13. The State Veterinarian reserves the right to cancel this permit if a specific concern for controlling animal disease arises or if any of the conditions are not met.

Do not be discouraged by the conditions and stipulations listed above. Cooperative Extension agents can assist you if you decide composting is the mortality disposal method you choose. If you have any questions, please call James Parsons at 910-296-2143 or 910-289-7624.

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**Does Bermudagrass Hay Cause Colic in Horses?**

*By: Randy Wood, Area Livestock Agent, N.C. Cooperative Extension, Hoke and Scotland County Centers (with excerpts from Dr. Bob Mowrey, NCSU Animal Science)*

This is one of the long debated topics among horse owners and equine veterinarians in the Southeast for the last several years. The problem is that after years of debate, as well as a few research trials that have attempted to answer this question, we still do not have a definitive answer to this age-old question. Despite not having a clear-cut answer, we do know a few things about bermuda hay and impaction colics.

The type of colic associated with bermudagrass is an ileocecal colic, which is difficult to treat but not very commonly seen (as far as colics go). Water intake (or more specifically lack thereof) is directly related to this type of colic. So for horses that have restricted access to water or are slow to drink due to weather conditions, this compounds the chance of colic greatly. Bermudagrass hay, no matter how high the quality, is not as easily digestible as Timothy or good Alfalfa. Horses that are suddenly switched to a mature bermuda hay from green forage or a Timothy-type hay are much more prone to colic-type problems than ones that are gradually introduced.
Finally, the biggest factor that is associated with bermuda colic is the level of maturity of the grass at harvest. While other factors, such as the presence of mold and weeds, will affect the quality of hay, the maturity level tends to be the major deciding factor with associated colics. The more mature a bermudagrass plant is, the lower the digestibility the resulting hay will have. To try to put a value on this, you will need a full analysis of the hay in question. The ADF value (acid detergent fiber) measures the digestibility of the hay. Hays with values at or below 35 percent are considered very digestible, while hays with ADF values above 35 percent are going to be less digestible and more prone to cause problems.

So what does this mean to the average horse owner who is feeding bermuda hay? In a nutshell, if your horse(s) has been on bermuda hay for more than a few weeks and has never experienced any type of impaction colic, you should at least feel that your horse can handle bermuda hay to a minor degree barring an unforeseen issue. On the other hand, if you have a horse that has had some colic problems in the past and is not a big drinker, you probably would do well to keep a close watch on them and pay attention to your hay quality.

Below are guidelines for things to watch for:

- Make sure the hay you are buying is relatively “young” hay or is “horse” quality. A hay analysis can help you determine this (measuring the ADF values mentioned above) but so can an experienced eye when the time comes to purchase your hay for the winter.
- Use common sense and proper management when introducing a newly purchased or boarded horse onto bermuda hay. Don’t allow horses to gorge themselves on bermuda hay the first few times they are fed it.
- Make sure they are getting proper water intake.
- Finally, if you know a particular horse is prone to colic, keeping that horse on a Timothy or Alfalfa mixture may be cheaper in the long run than a colic surgery.

So while no clear answers are to be had for the question of does bermuda hay cause colic, it is clear that some horses will be easier to manage on bermuda than others.

On October 1, 2008, the Mandatory Country Of Origin Labeling (MCOOL) began. This federal mandate is a retail labeling law that provides information to consumers at the time of purchase. It is not a food safety law. Retailers must label their product with one of four labels: U.S. Origin, Multiple Countries of Origin that includes the U.S., Imported Direct for Slaughter, and Imported Beef. There are exemptions for food service, small retailers, processed food, and National Animal Identification System participants.

How will MCOOL affect beef producers? You will need to keep records on animals that you sell for at least one year. This can be a very basic record such as: I had x number of calves born on my farm this year. You can also record when a calf was born on a pocket calendar or notepad. You need some type of written record to show that the calf was born on your farm in the U.S. Producers will also need to sign an affidavit when selling cattle at a local stockyard or other market. This is a one-page affidavit that you sign attesting to the fact that you have first-hand knowledge or business records that all livestock sold are of U.S. origin. A copy of the affidavit is available at your Extension Center or on the N.C. Cattlemen’s website at:

http://www.nccattle.com/

If beef producers are selling private treaty or value-added (freezer) beef, they will need to fill out the top portion of the affidavit (same as selling at an auction barn) and keep the form in your records.