Important Information

**North Carolina State University**

**Horse Short Courses** - The Horse Feeding Course will be on Thursday, May 15, and the Horse Forage Management Course will be on Friday, May 16. Classes will be at the Ramada Inn-Blue Ridge in Raleigh. For more information, call me at 671-3276 at the Extension Center.

**Livestock Compensation Program** - The Farm Service Agency announced that the sign-up for the Livestock Compensation Program (LCP) for Robeson County began March 19, 2008. A final date has not been established at this time. The LCP will provide benefits to livestock producers who suffered feed losses or incurred additional feed losses directly resulting from natural disasters such as, but not limited to, the excessive drought suffered in Robeson County in 2007. The disaster period is from January 1 until December 31, 2007.

To be eligible under LCP, livestock must be: dairy cattle, beef cattle, bison, beefalo, equine, poultry, elk, reindeer, sheep, goats, swine, or deer that were physically located in an eligible county on the beginning date of the applicable disaster period, were maintained for commercial use as a part of a farming operation on the beginning date of the disaster period, and were not produced and maintained for reasons other than commercial use as a part of a farming operation. Such excluded uses include, but are not limited to, wild, free roaming animals or animals used for recreational purposes such as pleasure, hunting, pets, roping, or for show.

Producers will not be penalized if they reduced the average number of livestock they owned for grazing during the production year for which assistance is being provided. Payment rates on a per-head basis will vary based on the kind of livestock. For questions concerning this program, please contact the Robeson County Farm Service Agency at Highway 72 West, 440 Caton Road, Lumberton or call 739-3349, extension 2.

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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
Anita and Howard Male are the owners of Black River Farmstead located on Highway 210 in Bladen County. Anita and Howard raise dairy goats and make cheese to sell. They have 13 American Alpine Milking goats and raise their own replacement kids. This year, they have moved to a year-round milking schedule using a staggered breeding system to get year-round milk. They milk two times a day at 6:30 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. Anita and Howard lived in Hawaii for many years, so all the goats have Hawaiian names like Makena. The older goats give about one gallon of milk per day and the first-time milkers give half a gallon per day. The goats are fed a grain mix and hay.

In 2003, they started out making soap. In 2006, they were certified to sell cheese. The N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services inspects the dairy two times a year. They also send in milk samples every month. Black River Farmstead mainly sells wholesale to businesses in the Raleigh, Durham, and Chapel Hill areas. Their cheese is served in many high-end restaurants including Weaver Street in Carrboro and Southern Village, Southern Seasons, and Sage. Bay Lakes Gallery in Elizabethtown will be a local distributor. They sold at farmers markets last year but may not sell there this year. Anita’s sister and brother-in-law, Tinker and Danny Linebaugh, are in charge of marketing and distribution. They add a lot to the success of the dairy. They meet every Thursday to exchange the cheese.

Anita interned with a dairy in Pender County to learn how to make cheese. Anita makes cheese on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. The milk is pasteurized in a 15-gallon vat pasteurizer. Cheese cultures are used to flavor the cheese. Black River Farmstead has four varieties - feta, plain chèvre, dill and garlic, and herbs de province which is a blend of lavender, rosemary, thyme, and oregano.
N.C. Agriculture Drought Recovery Program - The N.C. Agriculture Drought Recovery Program is a cost-shared project to assist farmers with restoring drought-damaged pastureland and provide additional water supply for livestock and crops. The project will respond to immediate critical needs resulting from the record-breaking drought of 2007. Grants will cover 75 percent of the cost of certain projects necessary to restore pasturelands to usable condition or to create new or improved water supplies for livestock and crops, to avoid crises in the event of future droughts. Recipients will cover the remaining 25 percent of the cost. Eligible projects include: pasture renovation, drilling and re-drilling wells, pond construction and renovation, conversion of closed lagoons to freshwater ponds, and upgrading existing irrigation systems. Technical assistance will be available to assist farmers with grass selection and other pastureland management for long-term productivity. The program started on May 1. It will end upon the depletion of available funds or until the need has been met. The Division of Soil and Water Conservation of the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources will operate the program through its district offices. Farmers may contact their local office at 739-3349 to learn if they are eligible and how to apply.

Forage Management Tips

    From Production and Utilization of Pastures and Forages in North Carolina

May

- Plant summer annuals at two-week intervals to stagger the forage availability.
- Fertilize warm-season grasses with nitrogen after each cutting or every four to six weeks on pastures.
- Spray pasture weeds while they are small (3 inches) for most effective control.
- Do not apply nitrogen to fescue pastures from April until August.

June

- Soil sample fields to be overseeded or planted in the fall. Apply limestone as far in advance of planting as possible.
- Consider a late planting of summer annuals to extend forage supply.
- Cross fencing is a practical tool to help manage feed quality.
- Graze bermudagrass close (1- to 2-inch stubble) and harvest any growth not grazed every four to six weeks.
- Control summer pasture weeds before they get too tall and mature.

July

- Continue a four- to six-week schedule of nitrogen applications on summer grasses. Do not delay application because of dry weather unless it has not rained at all since the previous application.
- Maintain harvesting frequency for quality hay.
- Hot, dry weather can result in nitrate and prussic acid poisoning of animals grazing stunted, highly fertilized summer annuals.
- Sample soils and apply lime on fields to be planted in the autumn.
- Decide with fescue pastures to stockpile. Apply nitrogen (60 to 80 pounds/acre) around September 1.
There are several ways to increase profit of marketing beef cattle. Beef producers need to know what options are available to them. Beef is traditionally sold as a commodity product at an auction market. As input costs continue to rise, producers must get the most out of their product. Look at your marketing scheme and plan for the changing industry. Many producers can add value to their product by making some changes in their management. Some options include Auction Markets, Graded Feeder Calf Sales, Video and Internet Auctions, Market Alliances, Process Verification Program and Quality System Assessment, Retained Ownership, and Niche or Value Added including local, grass-fed, all-natural, and organic beef. Below are some advantages and disadvantages of each.

**Auction Markets** - This is the traditional method. Prices are seasonal with the lowest prices in the fall due to the increased number being sold. The highest prices tend to be in the spring. Advantages are least complex method, convenient, and no limit on the number or size of animals. Disadvantages include fewer buyers at the sale and the seller pays trucking costs. Auction markets usually pay the lowest price per pound for the calves.

**Graded Feeder Calf Sales** - These sales are a cooperative effort by N.C. Cooperative Extension, NCDA, the N.C. Cattlemen’s Association, and livestock markets. Producers bring their cattle to be sorted into uniform lots based on sex, weight, grade, and breed. This allows buyers to minimize assembly and transportation costs. Smaller cow-calf producers can market their cattle in lots. Graded Sales can bring about $5 per cwt. over weekly auction sales. Disadvantages include limited number of sale dates (a few days in the fall and spring) and the seller pays trucking costs.

**Video and Internet Auctions** - Feeder calves are sold in truckload lots (48,000 pounds). A videotape or pictures are placed on a website or sent to buyers. A written description of the breed(s), health program, and other information is included. Buyers bid on the lots. The auction site gets a commission and serves as a marketing agency. Advantages include buyers from all over the United States, increased prices based on criteria, and trucking is paid by the buyer. Some disadvantages are only selling truckload lots (can combine farms) and seller has to weigh and have the cattle inspected.

**Market Alliances** - Alliances have specific requirements for breeding, feeding, and management of the calves. There is an increased amount of paperwork and certifications required. Some advantages include market research is done by the alliance, producers know what they need to raise, product is based on the retail value of the final product, delivery dates and location are negotiated, and trucking is paid by the buyer. Some disadvantages include the need for larger lots and specific breeds and feeding and health programs are required. Producers need to plan months and years ahead.

**Process Verification Program (PVP) and Quality System Assessment (QSA)** - PVP is a USDA program for verifying certain product attributes such as age and source of cattle. In the case of age and source verification, PVP programs create a documented, auditable procedure for the collection and transfer of age and source information. QSA is similar to PVP, although a QSA generally involves certification of a system that may involve several entities. QSA describes how age/source is documented by the packer, from source feedlots, and their producer suppliers (cow-calf producers).

**Retained Ownership** - This has been an option for years but not used by many producers. Producers own the cattle throughout the animal’s life. Feeder calves are sent to a feedlot which feeds and manages them. Producers pay feed, yardage, and health costs. Advantages include the ability to add value to the cattle and receive feedback from feedlot and packers. Disadvantages include volatile feed prices and time frames for the finishing phase.
Niche or Value Added including local, grass fed, all natural, and organic - These are lumped together to include any types of direct marketing of finished beef. This group used to be freezer beef but recently has become much more. This usually involves a producer finishing the animal instead of selling a feeder calf. Certain management practices are used, so the animals are raised to what the consumer wants. It is best to have the beef sold or a contract before it is produced. Management practices often cost more, and therefore, a producer must get more out of the beef than traditional commodity beef. A producer must possess a higher degree of marketing skills. Additional rules and regulations may apply. Consumers want to be assured that their beef was raised in a particular way and are willing to pay more. Local production can be any type of beef that is raised locally. Grass-fed beef has been finished on grass rather than a corn-based ration. All natural is a gray area. Technically, all natural means beef without other additives included - a large portion of commodity beef is all natural. To many people, all natural means raised without hormones and antibiotics. Organic beef is beef certified by a government agency that a strict production system was used. Producers need to do background research on what the types are and plan before they start raising beef to meet these criteria. There are many advantages, but you must have a plan to succeed.

Drought Management Quiz

Adapted by Michelle Shooter from a presentation by NCSU Extension Specialist Dr. Matt Poore, Drought Management, Lessons Learned and a Look Toward the Future

1. Which governmental group(s) rapidly developed drought response programs in 2007?
   a) NCDA and CS Emergency Programs Division (with aid of other divisions)
   b) North Carolina Cooperative Extension
   c) The Governor’s Office and Council of State
   d) USDA – FSA
   e) N.C. Division of Soil and Water Conservation
   f) All of the above

2. What is the shortest height to which you should ever graze a fescue plant?
   a) 1 inch
   b) 2 inches
   c) 4 inches
   d) The shorter the better

3. What is the best way to keep plants from being grazed too short?
   a) Use infected fescue
   b) Use bermudagrass
   c) Provide supplemental feed
   d) Use rotational grazing
   e) Keep cows with no teeth

4. How much does the typical 4’ x 5’ bale of grass hay weigh?
   a) 500 to 600 lbs.
   b) 600 to 800 lbs.
   c) 800 to 1,000 lbs.
   d) Over 1,000 lbs.
5. Which of these crop residues has the highest level of protein?

a) Corn stover
b) Cotton gin trash
c) Soybean stubble
d) Peanut hay

6. Emergency educational programs resulted in the production of about how many 800-lb. rolls of corn stover in 2007?

a) About 20,000 rolls
b) About 125,000 rolls
c) Between 1 and 2 million rolls

7. Which of the following best describes the potential feeding value of corn stover?

a) Works well as a feed for dry or lactating cows if supplemented appropriately
b) Works well for dry cows but not for lactating cows
c) Works better for growing cattle than cows, because they waste less
d) It beats a snowball (but not by much)

8. How do crop residues best fit into beef cattle production systems?

a) As dry cow feeds only
b) As emergency feeds only
c) Only when other feeds are expensive
d) Only when they can be used near the site of production
e) Only when they can be directly grazed by cows
f) We really don’t know!

9. What is the most critical component of a drought response effort?

a) Authorization of federal disaster programs
b) Cooperation of state agencies in aid and educational programs
c) Private donations to help producers deal with the hardship
d) Timely and intelligent management decisions by producers

10. What is the most important thing for you to do during drought recovery?

a) Rebuild cattle numbers when grass starts to grow
b) Reseed pastures that were killed
c) Sign up for disaster aid programs
d) Go away for a long vacation
e) Develop a drought management plan
f) Keep pastures grazed down to prevent weeds and to allow clover to come back

11. What are our biggest challenges for future droughts?

a) It is so easy to forget!
b) Convincing producers to manage for drought before there is a drought
c) Limited funding for educational programs
d) Limited funding for applied research programs
Livestock Guardian Dogs

Adapted by Tiffanee Conrad-Acuña Livestock Extension Agent, N.C. Cooperative Extension, Richmond County Center, from research done by USDA

Livestock guardian dogs are used to protect sheep, goats, and, occasionally, cattle from predators. Predators can include coyotes, foxes, dogs, bears, or even people. Sometimes the size of the livestock guardian dog and scent marking are all that a predator needs to stay away. If you have significant losses due to predation in your herd, a livestock guardian dog may be your solution. The dogs are introduced to livestock as puppies, so they "imprint" on the animals. The best time to bring a new puppy home is around seven to eight weeks old. A dog raised with sheep will generally not be an effective guardian of cattle or goats and vice versa. Proper socialization and instinct, not training, are key to rearing an effective dog. The ideal guard dog is alert, confident, and intelligent while acting independently and instinctively. It should investigate intruders but not wander far from the herd. It should protect the herd without harming them. Dogs used to herd the animals, such as border collies and Australian shepherds, are different from those that are used to guard them. Guard dogs are discouraged from biting, chasing, and barking at livestock, whereas herding dogs are encouraged to do these things as well as acting on commands from their owner. There are approximately 25 dogs that are classified as livestock guardian breeds; however, five of the breeds are most commonly used. Oftentimes, the breeds are crossbred for hybrid vigor and to try to select for several desirable traits.

The Akbash breed originally from Turkey is a relatively low-energy breed. Because it is in their nature to lie with the flocks they guard most of the day, they do not possess lots of endurance or energy. It is still very much a working breed and is happiest when given a task to complete. These dogs are known for their intelligence, bravery, independence, and loyalty.

The Anatolian was developed to be independent, forceful, and responsible. They are intelligent and can learn quickly but might choose not to obey; this is not generally a dog for a beginning or reserved owner. They become very protective of other animals in the household and will treat them as their "herd." They have also been known to kill bears to protect their charges but do have a higher tendency to injure livestock.

The Great Pyrenees is originally from France and Spain. When threatened, they will let off a round of very loud and deep barking. These dogs do not attack unless it is absolutely necessary, and they are more likely to intimidate intruders by their bark and size. These great dogs are usually gentle, loving animals. They mature quicker than most other breeds and injure livestock less than the other breeds. They are also known to be less aggressive to other dogs.

The Komondor's temperament is like that of most livestock guard dogs; it is calm and steady when things are normal. In cases of trouble, the dog will defend fearlessly its charges. An athletic dog, the Komondor is fast and powerful and will leap at a predator to drive it off or knock it down. An explosion in the coyote population and a reluctance to use poison baits has led to a widespread use of the Komondor as a herd guardian in the United States.

Maremmas can be good companion dogs in areas with adequate open space. Centuries of breeding the dogs to be gentle with lambs but fiercely protective of their flock has created a breed that will bond to families and show a calm, intelligent disposition. However, the dogs may display hostility towards outsiders, and they are not suitable companion dogs for urban areas due to their large size and need for open space.
Composting for Horse Farms
Adapted by Tiffanee Conrad-Acuña from an article produced by Alayne Blickle from the Horses for Clean Water Program

With the price of fertilizer rising every day and expected to increase even more this summer, composting for horse farms has become a hot topic with horse owners. Composting is a way to speed up the natural process for manure and bedding to decompose by providing a good environment for bacteria and microorganisms that assist the decomposition. As the manure breaks down, a lot of heat is produced which destroys weed seeds, fly larvae, and pathogens that can cause disease. The end product is a crumbly, dark, earthy-smelling material which can be used to fertilize pastures and save money. It is important to have a plan for what to do with your manure, since horses produce approximately 45 lbs. of manure per day. A pile of manure will shrink to about half its size during composting which will help you to reduce the amount that needs to be managed.

There are many benefits to composting. Odors and flies are reduced, and it creates a valuable source of fertilizer to use on your property, to give away, or to sell to others who need it. If you decide to give composting a try, you’ll want to make sure to locate the pile in a convenient area close to stalls and paddocks. You will want it to be on high, dry, and level ground that is far away from streams, ponds, or wetlands. The pile will need to be at least 3 feet high for the manure to start building heat. You can build a compost bin to contain the pile, but you don’t have to have one as long as you can get a 3-foot depth. You will want to start piling the manure into 1 bin until it is full, and then leave it alone and start filling up the next bin. Within 2-4 months, the first bin should be ready to spread on pastures. You can help the pile to decompose by covering it to prevent it from getting too wet in winter and too dry in summer. This also helps to prevent the nutrients from leaching into the soil. If the compost is too wet or dry, it can stop decomposing. If it gets too wet, it will begin to smell. Compost should stay about as damp as a wrung-out sponge. You will also need to get air into the pile so that the microorganisms can breathe while doing their job. The easiest way to do this is to insert several 5-foot PVC pipes into the center of the pile like a chimney. If you have a tractor, you can occasionally turn the manure to speed composting.

To spread the manure, you will need either a wheel barrel for small jobs or a manure spreader. You can also spread it from the back of a pickup truck. You want to spread it very thin, around ¼ inch. Some manure spreaders are corrosion resistant which means you can store the manure in it for long periods of time, but you would not want to do this with your wheel barrel or leave other equipment, such as shovels, in the pile. Manure spreaders come in all sizes now, where they can be hooked up to lawn tractors or 4-wheelers. Also, keep in mind that shavings can cause issues with your pasture. Applying stall waste (with too much bedding) that has not been composted may actually slow growth and cause yellowing in your pasture. If this is the case, you may want to consider using your stall waste as a mulch around your property instead of as a fertilizer. Please call me for more information about effectively composting horse manure.

Drought Management Quiz Answers– from page 5

Biosecurity for Backyard Flocks

By James Parsons, Area Poultry Agent, N.C. Cooperative Extension

Biosecurity for poultry can be defined as any management practice that reduces the chance of a flock being exposed to some disease-causing organism. With Infectious Laryngotracheitis (LT) still in the area and the threat of Avian Influenza, all poultry growers need to increase their biosecurity. In 2006, USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service launched a national biosecurity campaign, called “Biosecurity: For the Birds,” that lists six ways to help prevent poultry diseases from infecting your flocks.

1. Keep Your Distance

Restrict access to your property and birds. Consider fencing off the area where your birds are to form a barrier between “clean” and “dirty” areas. The clean area is the immediate area surrounding your birds. The dirty or buffer area must be considered to be infected with germs, even if the birds appear healthy and disease free. Allow only people who take care of your birds to come into contact with the m. You and your caretakers should not attend bird shows or other events where birds are present. You should not allow visitors to your property to come in contact with your birds. Game birds and migratory waterfowl should not have contact with your flock, because they can carry germs and diseases.

2. Keep It Clean

You would not think of tracking dirt and disease into your home where it could infect your family. Do not do that to your birds either. Germs can be picked up on shoes and clothing and moved from one area to another. To keep your birds germ free, keep a pair of shoes and a set of clothes to wear only around your birds. Scrubbing your shoes with a long-handled scrub brush and disinfectant will remove droppings, mud, and debris. Clothes should be washed in a washing machine with laundry detergent. You should also wash your hands thoroughly before entering your bird area.

3. Do Not Haul Disease Home

Car and truck tires, poultry cages, and equipment can harbor germs. If you travel to a location where other birds are present, or even to the feed store, be sure to clean and disinfect these items before you return to your property. Do you plan to take some of your birds to a fair or exhibition? If so, keep those birds separated from the rest of your flock for at least two weeks after the event to ensure that they did not pick up a disease. New birds should be kept separate from your flock for at least 30 days before putting them with the rest of your birds.

4. Do Not Borrow Disease From Your Neighbor

Do not share birds, lawn and garden equipment, tools, or poultry supplies with your neighbor or other bird owners. If you do borrow anything, make sure you clean and disinfect it before you reach your property.

5. Know The Warning Signs of Infectious Bird Diseases

Many bird diseases can be difficult to diagnose. The following symptoms may indicate something wrong with your birds: sudden death; diarrhea; decreased or complete loss of egg production; soft shelled or misshapen eggs; sneezing; gasping; nasal discharge; coughing; lack of energy or appetite; swelling of tissues around the eyes; discoloration of the wattles, combs, and legs; depression; muscular tremors; drooping wings; twisting of head and neck; lack of coordination; and paralysis.

6. Report Sick Birds

Do not wait to report unusual signs of disease or unexpected deaths among your birds. Call your Extension agent, local veterinarian, or NCDA&CS poultry representative. You may also take sick birds to the NCDA&CS diagnostic labs in Raleigh or Rose Hill. Early detection and reporting is the most important step in eradicating a disease outbreak. Do not be afraid to report disease problems. State and federal veterinarians want to hear about sick and dying birds.