NC COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

ROBESON COUNTY CENTER

Livestock News

September 2019

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Beef Cattle Series

There will be a Beef Cattle 101 class held in Robeson County this fall. The class is for any new cattle producers or anyone interested in starting a cattle farm. Classes are Thursdays, November 14 and 21 and field day on November 23. Cost is $25 for the series. Each additional farm member is $10 each. Please call 910-671-3276 or email Taylor_Chavis@ncsu.edu to register for the classes by November 7.

2020 Cape Fear Cattle Conference

Save the date for the 2020 Cape Fear Cattle Conference! It will be on Tuesday, January 28, at the Southeastern Agricultural Center in Lumberton. Dr. Thomas van Dyke, NCSU, will be discussing vaccination protocols. Lee van Vlake, Clemson Extension, and Dr. Christine Long, Pineview Veterinary Hospital, will be talking about dystocia to include a hands-on demonstration.

Hay Directory

North Carolina Department of Agriculture's Hay Alert is at http:// www.ncagr.gov/HayAlert/. It lists people selling hay or looking for hay to buy. It is free to list your hay.

If you are interested in learning more about any information in this newsletter, contact the Extension Center at 910-671-3276 or visit our website at robeson.ces.ncsu.edu. For accommodations for persons with disabilities, contact Cooperative Extension no later than five business days before the event.

Taylor Chavis

Taylor Chavis
Extension Agent
Agriculture - Livestock

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Robeson County Center
O. P. Owens Agriculture Center
P. O. Box 2280
455 Caton Road
Lumberton, NC 28359

Phone - 910-671-3276
Fax - 910-671-6278
Website - robeson.ces.ncsu.edu

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Animal Waste Management

Swine Farm Permitting Process Update

By: Eve Honeycutt, Livestock Extension Agent with N.C. Cooperative Extension in Lenoir and Greene Counties

There are lots of questions surrounding the permitting process for swine farms. All farms submitted a permit renewal package and some have gotten calls or letters about your package. The staff at the Division of Environmental Quality (formerly DWQ) is indeed going through every permit package to be sure that all the documents were included.

If you receive a letter or phone call regarding your permit package, you can respond with the needed information via email or regular mail. If you are unsure of what they are requesting, contact your technical specialist or Extension Agent to make sure you submit the proper documentation.

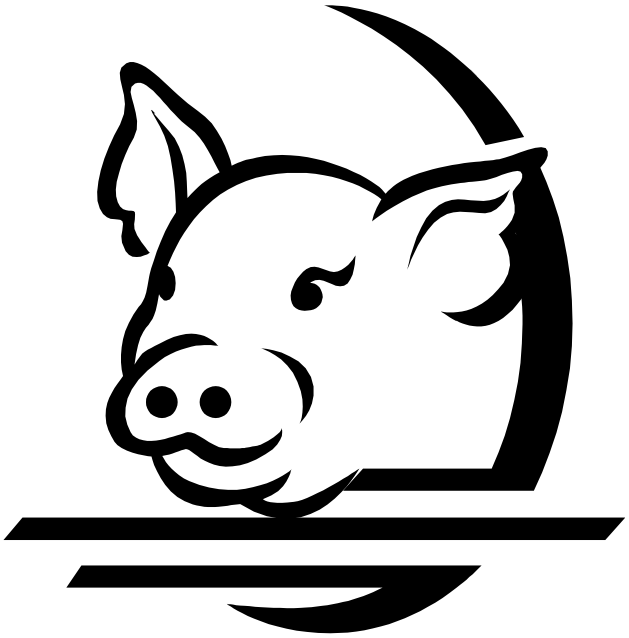
Many growers are concerned about the changes to the permit. Your industry leaders are also concerned and have taken action. NC Farm Bureau is very focused on making sure the permit is fair to growers and property owners. Farm Bureau has filed appeals on all three of the general permits. They have two arguments:

DEQ violated the Administrative Procedures Act by taking the terms of the environmental justice settlement agreement, which was not made available for public comment, and incorporating them into the final permit. Essentially, that the settlement agreement short-circuited the proper permit renewal process.

The terms of the permit should have been adopted as rules before they were put into the permit.

NC Farm Bureau is asking that the court prevent the new permits from going into effect (keep the existing ones in place), and that DEQ be forced to adopt new permits to replace the ones scheduled to go into effect on October 1.

As more is learned about this appeals process, Extension will continue to keep you updated. Until you hear otherwise, you should continue to operate under the terms of your current permit.



Reducing Hay Loss During Winter Feeding

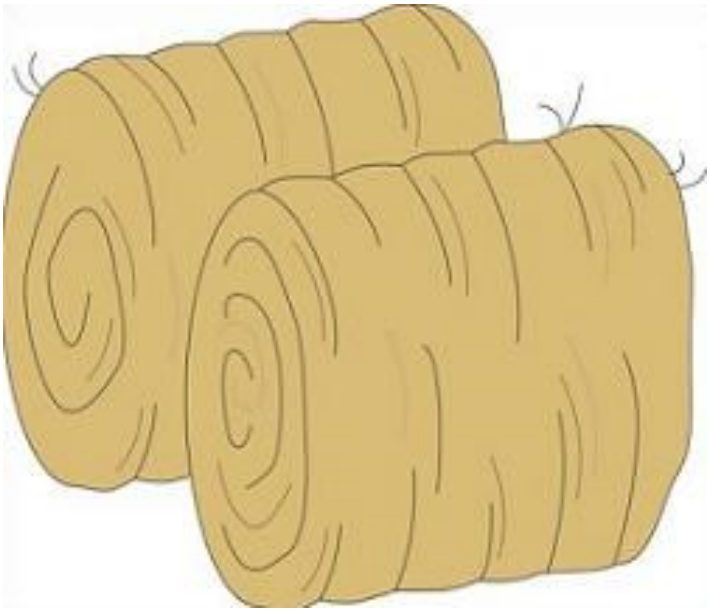
By: Jamie Warner, Livestock Extension Agent with N.C. Cooperative Extension in Montgomery County

You may think it's too early to start thinking about Winter feeding strategies, but it's not. Feeding hay can get expensive, but for most cattle farmers it is a necessary evil during the winter months. Below are a few suggestions that can possibly help minimize hay wastage during winter feeding and help you plan for the upcoming cold weather.

- Limit the amount of hay fed at a single time. This can be achieved by using a hay ring or by feeding a day's worth of hay at a time if possible.
- Feed hay in well-drained areas to reduce losses due to excessive moisture. Preferably, rotate hay feeding areas to different spots around the pasture/farm.
- When you have to store hay outside, decrease spoilage by covering bales with a tarp or waterproof covering and placing them on old wooden pallets off of the bare ground.
- Make sure that adequate space around hay rings is provided so that all cows (not just the "bull"ies, pardon the pun) get a sufficient amount. A general rule of thumb is 10 cows per ring.

If you feed round bales that are unrolled on the pasture for cattle, do so on a daily basis. This will diminish hay waste but also allow you to move the feeding area around thus using the cattle as your manure/nutrient spreaders.

Hay wastage is inevitable, but with good management techniques, it can be reduced. For more help with winter feeding strategies, please contact your local Agriculture Extension Agent.



Considerations for Weaning Spring-Born Calves

By: Anthony Growe, Livestock and Row Crops Extension Agent with N.C. Cooperative Extension in Richmond County

As we move into the fall months, many producers are preparing to wean their spring-born calves. You have the goal to keep your calves healthy and growing throughout the entire weaning process while maximizing profitability. We know weaning is a stressful experience for both calves and their dams. While you cannot totally alleviate stress, there are some management practices that can be used to help minimize it during the weaning process while remaining profitable.

When to Wean

Several factors can influence when you may choose to wean your calf crop. Pasture availability, cow body condition, and market prices all play a role on choosing a weaning date. Beef calves that are nursing from cows are most commonly weaned between 4 to 9 months old but if forage is in good supply and the dam has a decent body condition of 3 or better, then it is usually best to wean when they are around the 7 to 9-month age.

Timely weaning is important as it allows the gestating dam to recover before the next calving season. If forage is in short supply due to drought, it can be economical to wean calves early. Although you may have to front the cost to feed early-weaned calves, gestating cows are able to dry off, recover and focus energy on their pregnancy. Also, dry cows have lower nutrient requirements which lightens the grazing pressure on pastures. When a cow is in a good body condition, they have a more efficient pregnancy with less complications.

Another factor that may influence your weaning time, are market prices. The majority of beef calves are born in the spring and weaned in the fall. At this time, feedlots and backgrounding operations are supplied with a large number of feeder calves. This high supply in the fall leads to our seasonally low calf prices. Adjusting weaning date or retaining calves may be necessary to take advantage of better market prices. Additionally, there are value-added sales that may have a minimum weaning length of 45 days. Producers who take advantage of these sales can expect to receive a higher price for their calves but must plan ahead to ensure their calves are weaned early enough to meet the 45-day weaning requirement.

Choosing a Location

When choosing a location to wean calves, make sure there is shade and fresh water available. Calves tend to have a greater water requirement during the weaning period. They are going to spend the majority of the first two days bawling and pacing along the fence that adjoins the cows' pasture. Placing a stock tank or trough with clean water near the fence line will encourage consumption.

Another consideration to make when choosing a weaning location is if the calves will be on pasture or in a dry lot. Even later in the year, pasture weaning has some economic benefit if calves are able to graze stockpiled bermudagrass. Feeding both hay and a protein supplement during weaning can be costly and will quickly reduce profits. Also, calves are more familiar with a pasture environment which is less stressful than keeping them in a dry lot. If calves are kept in a dry lot, feed high quality, mold-free hay and consider adding a nutritious protein supplement.

Weaning Method

When choosing a weaning method, you have options that will affect the health of your calves. Traditional weaning involves moving calves to a new location where they cannot see, smell or hear their dams. This "out of sight out of mind" method can be somewhat stressful to newly weaned calves especially if they are moved long distances to an unfamiliar area.

Another weaning method is fence line weaning. Calves are weaned in a pasture or dry lot that has cross fencing (usually woven wire or electric high-tensile) separating them from the cows' pasture. Calves and their dams are able to see each other and even make some contact through the fence. Over the last 10 years, several universities have studied the effects weaning on weight gain and have found that calves who were weaned using the fence-line were significantly heavier than calves that were weaned using the traditional method. Researchers also observed that calves paced and bawled less in the fence-line weaning scenario. The largest drawback from fence line weaning is calves often crawl under the fence even if the fence is electrified. Although it's more expensive, high tensile woven wire will keep calves in the weaning area while still being in contact with their dams. Always choose the separation method that works best for your operation with the goal to minimize stress.

As you start planning to wean your calf crop keep in mind that the process can be stressful for both the dams and the calves. Refrain from introducing any additional stresses such as branding, tagging, vaccinating or castration during this period. Remember, overly stressed calves often become sick calves which require treatment.

Choosing a Blanket for Your Horse

By: Kelly McCaskill, Livestock Extension Agent with N.C. Cooperative Extension in Moore County

Although it's still pretty warm and sunny for most of NC right now, cooler weather is just around the corner, so it's never too early to start thinking about finding the right blanket for your horse. There are several factors to keep in mind when selecting a blanket for your horse.

Will the blanket be used in the barn or for turn-out?

Is inclement weather a common problem where you live?

Has the horse been clipped or left to grow a coat for the winter?

There are three main types of blankets when looking to select a blanket for your horse; horse sheets, stable blankets and turnout blankets. Horse sheets, which are light-weight and provide little additional warmth, are usually used for protection from the sun and to keep dust off of your horse. Since they are light weight they are also not as durable as some of the other options. These are best used during warm weather.

Stable blankets are heavier weight than the horse sheets so they provide a good bit of additional warmth but are not usually made of waterproof or particularly durable material. They can actually soak up the rain or snow, making your horse colder than if they had on no blanket. These blankets are made to be used on horses while they are housed inside a stall or barn.

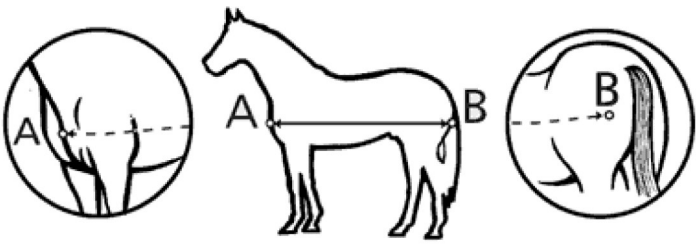
Turnout blankets are usually a similar weight to the stable blanket but are made of a thick, durable, waterproof material that makes them ideal for horses that are outdoors, especially during very cold or wet weather.

All of the styles come in different weight options, usually light, medium and heavy, all having varying thickness, therefore providing varying degrees of warmth. You should choose the weight based on the climate in which you and your horses live. Whether your horse is clipped or has grown a winter coat will also factor into which weight you choose. Most horses that are able to grow their winter coat do not need a blanket, but if you prefer to put one on them, a lighter weight one would be best. Horses that are clipped for showing or other reasons may need a heavier weight depending on how cold it gets where you live.

There are also options in the durability or "denier" of the blanket. A very light strength sheet would have a denier of 210 versus a heavy strength turnout blanket with a denier of 2100. You should choose your denier based on how often your horse will be wearing the blanket and for what purposes. A horse that needs to be covered at show events just to keep dust off and may only have the blanket on for a couple of hours would be fine with a lower denier, whereas a horse that is wearing the blanket for most of the day out in a pasture where he may roll around or rub against fencing would need a much higher denier.

Fitting the blanket to your horse is the last step in selecting the right blanket. Most standard blankets will fit from the shoulder to the tail and will cover the horse's entire body. They can have closed or open fronts and typically have a strap around the girth and back leg straps to keep the blanket in place. To measure your horse, use a soft measuring tape such as a tailors measuring tape. It helps to have someone assist you, so that one person can hold one end of the tape while the other person can accurately measure your horse. Take the measuring tape and hold one end of the tape right at the middle point of your horses' chest and then slowly run the tape along the side of his body, coming all the way to the middle part of his tail. In order to get a precise measurement, you'll need to make sure that you are running a straight line across the middle length of his body and that you are not holding the measuring tape too high up or down too low. You should measure in inches since this is the number used to find the right size. If the measurement you get falls on a size that is not offered by blanket companies, then you can round the number up to the next size offered. Standard size blankets range from 64 inches for small ponies to 90 inches for large draft horses, so carefully measuring your horse is the key to selecting a well fitted blanket that will give him complete coverage. Generally speaking, an average size horse will most likely measure somewhere between 74 and 78 inches.

If you have any questions on how to choose the right blanket for your horse your local tack shop should be able to help you, or you can always contact your local livestock extension agent.



Sheep and Goat Breeding Considerations

By: Taylor Chavis, Livestock Extension Agent with N.C. Cooperative Extension in Robeson County

We are starting to see signs of fall; turning leaves, cooler temps, and crisp morning air. Sheep and goat producers should be getting prepared for their breeding season. Sheep and goat are typically short-day breeders, meaning they breed when periods of daylight are shorter. The normal breeding season is usually September through January. Gestation is 5 months for sheep and goats. Does or ewes bred in the fall will usually kid or lamb in the spring of the next year. The profitability of a sheep and goat operation depends on the number of lambs and/or kids raised, weaned, and marketed each year. As the breeding season is upon us, there are a few things that sheep and goat producers can do to ensure that their breeding season is profitable.

The breeding season should last for at least 40-45 days; this will allow ewes or does to complete 2 estrous or heat cycles. Estrous cycles are 21 days. The breeding ratio is 1 buck for every 20-30 does or ewes. Bucks should be housed separately from does/ewes and not allowed to run with the does/ewes throughout the year. Having a planned breeding season allows better management during pregnancy. Kids will be more uniform in size at weaning, which is ideal for marketing. It is a good idea to focus your breeding schedule to take advantage of the best marketing opportunities for your area. Prices usually tend to be higher before and during ethnic holidays because the demand for meat is higher.

Body Condition Score (BCS) should be assessed to make sure that does and ewes are not too thin or too fat. Animals that are too thin or too fat will not cycle into estrus and will not be bred. Ideal body condition is a 5 or 6. Body condition should be maintained during the breeding season and at lambing/kidding. Consider flushing does or ewes that are not in ideal body condition. Flushing (increasing the amount of feed offered) occurs 2-3 weeks before
breeding season and provides animals extra nutrition to put on weight prior to breeding. Flushing does or ewes that are in ideal condition will generally not respond. Bucks should also be monitored for body condition. Bucks will lose weight during the breeding season because of the increased physical activity and decreased feed intake.

Hoof trimming, vaccination, and deworming can also affect the breeding season. Animals' feet should be examined for sores, signs of foot rot or infection, and overgrown hooves. Hooves need to be in good shape during a period of increased activity both for doe/ewe and buck. Producers should consider vaccinating twice per year, at the start of the breeding season and 4-6 weeks before lambing or kidding. Bucks should also be vaccinated once per year. Producers can also choose to vaccinate only once per year, which should be done 4-6 weeks before lambing or kidding to ensure immunity is passed to the lamb or kid. Kids/lambs should be vaccinated at 8 weeks old, then a booster at 12 weeks old. CD&T is labeled for goats and is for overeating disease and tetanus, and multivalent clostridial vaccine is labeled for sheep. Deworming should be done before the breeding season. If producers plan to flush does or ewes, deworming should be done prior to flushing.

Youth Livestock Showing Tips

By: Ashley Robbins, Livestock Extension Agent with N.C. Cooperative Extension in Chatham County

Showing livestock can be a magical experience for youth. There is nothing quite like eating, sleeping and living with your show animal and then putting everything you have practiced into play when you step into that arena. Whether you are a seasoned showman or a beginner, there are certain things you may need to consider before you go to the show, while you are at the show and when you come home from the show.

There are several key factors that you need to accomplish before you even think about leaving for the show. First and foremost, your animal needs to be trained to lead. The key here is practice, practice, practice! If your animal is not trained to lead they will be a danger to you, a danger to others and a danger to themselves. You also need to study up! Take a look at the show rules, each show has different rules and for showmanship, you need to know all about your animal including anatomy and how to properly set that animal up, each species is different. Next, you may need to obtain proper registration papers, health papers, or ear tags for your animal, these can be obtained by your veterinarian, the NC Department of Agriculture or your animal's breed association. These papers may take several weeks to get processed so plan ahead. Along those same lines consider the health of your animal. Before going to the show they need to be vaccinated. Vaccination timing is very important, typically, animals should be vaccinated two weeks before they leave the farm. If the vaccine you are using needs a booster then you might need to back up the date of the first shot so that the final shot is given two weeks prior to leaving. Vaccines help strengthen your animal's immune system so that their body can fight any pathogens they might come in contact with. Lastly before going to the show, make sure to pack the proper supplies for both yourself and your animal. You need to makes sure to pack several changes of clothes because you will get dirty, pack your show clothes, snack food and plenty of water. When it comes to your animal, make sure to pack enough feed, hay, and bedding to get your animal comfortably through the show. Bring your show halters and/or sticks, shampoo, a water hose, clippers, brushes, feed bucket, water bucket, and a pitch fork. Make sure your halters are cleaned up and shiny and that your clippers work! Now you're ready to go to the show!

Consider arriving to the show in enough time to get the animals settled in, animals take more time to get used to a new location than we do. Until they get adjusted you might notice them not eating as much as they normally do and acting restless. Feed them consistently during their stay, this will get them in a pattern and animals like patterns. It may be a good idea to feed your animal a little before show time so that they have something in their belly which will make them happy. Feeding them a little before show time will also fill them out and make them look better. Don't forget to change into your show clothes before going into the ring. Typically that is a collared shirt, nice pair of jeans, and clean boots (be aware that color and style of clothes differ across species). When in the arena remember to always keep your eye on the judge, maintain control of your animal, set them up in a way that makes them look the best and lastly, smile, you're having fun right?

Maintaining the health of your animal while at a livestock show is very important. Try to decrease the amount of contact that your animal has with other animals while at the show. Possible ways to do that are; use a solid barrier like plywood in your pen to separate contact with animals in adjoining pens or you can place your tack stall in between where your animal is tied and other animals. Never allow nose-to-nose contact between your animal and other animals. Also, make sure that all feed pans, water buckets and show supplies have been thoroughly cleaned before initial use and never share them with other people's animals. If you absolutely have to lend or borrow something that comes in direct contact with your animal then give enough notice so that those items can be properly disinfected. If by chance your animal starts to display signs of sickness, most shows have a veterinarian on stand-by who should be called over to examine your animal and recommend treatment if needed.

Once the show is over and you have returned home, you should quarantine your animal for at least 2 weeks, 4 weeks if possible. This will allow your animal to recover from any virus they may have come in contact with at the show and prevent them from spreading it to any other animals on your farm. This also allows your animal to get re-acclimated to their environment and nutrition plan. Next, you should make sure that all feed pans, water buckets and show supplies have been thoroughly cleaned with some type of disinfectant, like bleach. Finally, properly store all of your show supplies in an orderly way that will protect them and keep them ready to go for your next show!

By following these simple tips, you can increase the chance of success not only for you and your show animal but of your fellow showmen, other animals that are at the show and even your show animal's herdmates back home.

Make Sure Your Back-Up is Ready to Go Into the Game

By: Richard Goforth, South Central Area Specialized Poultry Agent with N.C. Cooperative Extension

Labor Day marks the unofficial end of summer, the return to school for students, while most people are not crazy about those things, it also brings the return of football season. One of the things you will often hear football coaches talking about this time of year, especially college coaches as they have to replace graduating and injured players regularly, is “the next man up”.

What they mean is not only do they have to prepare and coach their current starters, but they have to make sure the backups understand the team and position goals and be ready to step into the game at a moment’s notice and perform just like the starter.

On a poultry farm the next man up is your generator if you loose power you need it to start, transfer and carry the load till the utility power returns, and just like when a player goes down you don’t know if that is for one play or the rest of the season. That means just like a great coaching staff prepares all the players to be ready to play on game day, you need to make sure your backup is ready at all times. In order to accomplish this, you need to first make sure you have the players in the right positions- generators must be sized properly, installed correctly, serviced regularly, and exercised routinely.

Generator sizing is important. If the generator is too small to carry the full load of the farm, including the startup surge produced when motors are first energized- just like using 150 pounds players as offensive linemen, your quarterback, in this case your farm- will get sacked. Many times, even if it was sized properly initially, on older farms growers forget to account for additional equipment added or changed over the years that has increased the amperage, even if only at the startup phase. Once the right equipment is in place, it needs to be installed correctly. Think of this as making sure each player has the right pads and gear for their position and then coaching each player how to play their position within the playbook.

In order for the generator and equipment to work properly and avoid costly injuries, it has to be installed so that it gets the protection and inputs it needs. A major issue with generator failure comes from improper installation. Sheds are not properly located or designed to allow for fresh clean air to enter the room, flow through the radiator and over the engine to provide proper cooling and removal of exhaust gas and heat. Common mistakes include making inlets too small, leaving too much space between the inlet and radiator, and placing the inlet near poultry house exhaust fans, coating the radiator and engine in layers of dust causing overheating.

Once you put the team in the right positions with the right gear, it has to maintained just like players need to do conditioning drills and weight training to maintain their bodies, the equipment must be serviced regularly to make sure it is in peak performance. The best way to ensure that happens is to setup a routine schedule based on time and hours of actual use. Many service items need to be checked at least quarterly, but if you have to put them in play, then the hours of use may trigger additional service requirements. Changing engine oil and replacing air and fuel filters are often carried out but these additional service items are often overlooked or put off: draining water and sludge buildup from fuel tank, checking and charging battery, ensuring radiator is clean and free of debris such as bird and wasp nests. Like a good team equipment manager, growers should also keep a stock of common replacement items; all filters, fan belt, and fluids; as well as being sure the fuel tank like the water cooler, is clean and full.

Finally, like all good teams it is important to practice regularly. This makes sure the coaches know the plays and the team is ready to execute their calls during the game. Generators should be exercised at least every two weeks under actual load. Just starting the generator does not tell you how it will perform in the game or how all the other equipment is working. It is essential that all those that may be responsible for the farm know the equipment and how to operate it. When hiring new employees, don’t forget to train them on generator backup procedures, including how to do manual overrides and basic troubleshooting. Make sure everyone knows the service provider’s number and establish a working relationship with your preferred service company before you have an emergency. That way they are familiar with your equipment and can offer better advice over the phone, stock parts and respond more effectively and in case of a regional issue it will likely improve your priority for assistance. Get your team in shape now because unfortunately hurricane season coincides with football season!