2008 Hay Field Day

The 2008 Hay Field Day is scheduled for Tuesday, August 12, at the Mountain Research Station in Waynesville. The program will begin at 9:00 am with registration. Throughout the day there will be demonstrations on mowing, tedding, raking, and baling. There will be educational programs on incorporating legumes into your pasture/hayfield, stand renovation and soil sampling, weed control, and on using a no-till drill. There will also be a trade show and sponsored lunch.

This is an excellent opportunity for producers to see new equipment in action, as well as learn about ways to improve your hayfield and/or pastures.

Buncombe County Cattlemen’s Association Meeting

This is a reminder of the next meeting of the Buncombe County Cattlemen’s Association. The meeting will be on Thursday, August 14, at the T.K. Brown farm, 641 North Fork Road, Black Mountain. There will be an educational program on working facility design and selection. The meeting will begin at 6:30 pm with a hotdog/hamburger meal. If you plan to attend, please call 255-5522 and let us know so we can prepare enough food for everyone.

100th Anniversary Celebration

On Thursday, August 14, there will be a celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Mountain Research Station in Waynesville. The opening ceremony will begin at 3:00 pm and will be followed by station tours from 4:00-5:30 pm. The celebration will conclude with a meal at 6:00 pm.
Madison County Graded Feeder Calf Sale

The Madison County State Graded Cattle Sale will be held at the Madison County Fairgrounds on **Tuesday, September 2, 2008.** Don’t miss out on this opportunity, as it will be the only state graded sale in WNC this year. Delivery times will be from 7:00 am – 2:00 pm on September 2 with the sale starting at 6:00 pm.

If cattle don’t meet Grade Standards for this sale, producers will have the option to take them back home or send their cattle on to Newport, TN with Randy Hodge for the weekly sale. If you are considering bringing cattle to this sale, please call Elizabeth Ayers, NC Cooperative Extension, Madison County, at 828-649-2411 with an estimated number of cattle.

Livestock Forage Disaster Program

On June 18, 2008, the 2008 Farm Bill was enacted into Public Law 110-246. As part of this new Farm Bill, five new disaster programs were created. This program is similar to the Livestock Compensation Program (LCP) that many of you took advantage of last year, but all of the new disaster programs carry a new stipulation. That stipulation is that producers purchase coverage of non-insurable crops with catastrophic risk protection (CAT) and/or Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP). Since pastureland is considered a non-insurable crop, you must have coverage with CAT or NAP in order to be eligible for Supplemental Agriculture Disaster Assistance programs.

The 2008 sign-up period for coverage with NAP and CAT has already passed; but for **2008 ONLY**, producers will be allowed to pay a $100 “buy-in” fee in order to be eligible for Supplemental Agriculture Disaster Assistance programs. There will be disaster assistance this year under LFP, so it may be worthwhile to look into “buying-in” to the program this year. The deadline for signing up is September 16, 2008.

In order to go through the “buy-in” process, you should contact your local Farm Service Agency office. If you have questions about this program, feel free to contact Jeff Bradley at the Buncombe County Extension Center at 255-5522 or your Farm Service Agency representative at 254-0916, extension #2.

No-Till Drill Available

Buncombe County Soil & Water Conservation District now has a no-till drill for farmers to rent. The rental cost of the drill will be $10/acre with a $50 minimum charge. This will be an excellent way for many of you to renovate drought-damaged pastures this fall or incorporate some winter annuals into your grazing system. For more details about this no-till drill, contact Anthony Dowdle at Buncombe Soil & Water Conservation District at 250-4785. Call soon as the calendar is already filling up with requests.

Another “Exceptional” Drought

As many of you may know, several of our western NC counties have been placed in the exceptional drought category, which is the designation for areas that are in the worst drought. I hope many of you have been planning for the winter already, but if you haven’t, now is the time.

Most of us had a pretty decent first cutting of hay, but our second cuttings just aren’t there; and we can only hope for a fall cutting similar to last year. Most of our pastures have dried up for the summer; and we are feeding hay like it is January, so we need to start making decisions now that will help get us through the winter.

The first step in getting through hard times is culling. We all have cows in our herd that are either old or unproductive, but we tend to hang on to these animals and “give ‘em one more year”. I know many of you culled last year in order to get through, so you may be in decent shape this year. If you have cattle that aren’t paying their room and board on your farm, they need to go. This will help you meet the needs of the cattle that are doing their job on your farm.

If you are currently feeding hay on a regular basis, you need to put your cattle in an area that you don’t mind ruining—this would be considered a sacrifice area. While your fescue is dormant, it doesn’t need cattle grazing what little bit is there.
Into the ground—it needs a rest so it will be prepared to grow when cooler weather (and hopefully rain) gets here. When your other pastures start growing again this fall, you can reseed this sacrifice area.

Another practice to consider is planting winter annuals. I have had several producers indicate to me that they stretched their winter hay supplies by no-till drilling winter annuals into their pastures for grazing. Some options to consider are winter wheat, annual rye grain, and annual ryegrass. These crops would allow you to graze when you normally would be feeding bales of hay. The normal practice is to let the crop establish itself and then graze your cattle. After they graze it down to the recommended height, you would remove your cattle and let it grow back. This process could be repeated several times throughout the winter if managed properly, which will save you money on hay expense.

This past year, our cost of production increased dramatically with fuel and fertilizer costs. Many of us tried to cut costs by skipping a year on fertility. While some of us may have gotten by this year, studies have shown that fertility directly affects the stocking rate allowed on pasture land. Pastures that aren’t fertilized can require up to 6 acres per cow/calf pair, while properly fertilized pastures can bring it down to 2.1 acres per cow/calf pair. One way to cut down on nitrogen costs is to incorporate legumes into our pastures. Legumes such as clover will fix nitrogen back into the soil, allowing you to apply less nitrogen when you fertilize. We all know that fertilizer is expensive, but a soil test can tell you exactly what your pastures need. By knowing exactly what you need, you can have your fertilizer custom blended to help you spend your fertilizer dollars more efficiently.

It is shaping up to be another tough year in the livestock business; but by implementing a few of these management practices, I think many of you will see a difference in your operation. If you have any questions concerning your livestock operation, call Jeff Bradley at the Buncombe County Extension Center at 255-5522.

**WNC Agricultural Options Opportunities for 2009**

The West District of North Carolina Cooperative Extension offers a program that provides resources to farmers as they increase the profitability of their businesses in our changing economy. The WNC Agricultural Options Program builds sustainable farming communities in our mountain region by providing resources directly to farmers who are diversifying and expanding their operations.

In 2008, WNC AgOptions awarded $5,000 to 23 area farmers and $2,500 to 14 farmers. In partnership with the N.C. Tobacco Trust Fund Commission, HandMade in America and the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Sciences, the West District of the N.C. Cooperative Extension has offered the program since 2004.

The awards offer incentive for farmers to try ventures – encouraging the sustainability of their operation, as well as demonstrating farming methods to the larger agriculture community. Of the 37 awarded projects in 2008, eight are livestock projects.

Ronald Searcy in Transylvania County, a 2008 recipient, has already noticed improvements with his new “weed abatement business.” He temporarily fences goats on his customers’ properties to control unwanted brush. With the award, Searcy purchased a gasoline power fencing system so that he can take up fences quickly and move to his other customers – which are increasing steadily.

Other livestock farmers who are WNC AgOptions recipients are improving facilities, investing in equipment that saves resources, or trying out a method or venture:

- In **Cherokee County**, Edgar Wood, a corn, soybean & pumpkin grower, renovated his pastures to raise hormone-free, grass-finished beef.
- In **Clay County**, Andrew Jones is growing small goat operation by building sufficient shelter and fencing.
- In **Madison County**, Coy Griffin, a former tobacco grower, improved his horse boarding business by modernizing and expanding his building.
- In **Transylvania County**, Kate Gieger and Tom Dierolf began a pastured layers and dairy goat operations, and expanded their beekeeping operation.
- In **Transylvania County**, Dale Robertson, farm manager of the camp Gwynn Valley, automated his milking operation, improving educational opportunities for campers.
- In **Yancey County**, Scott Paquin, owner of Firefly Farm, added natural grass-fed beef cattle to his operation.
The N.C. Tobacco Trust Fund Commission, which funds WNC AgOptions, was established by the General Assembly in 2000 as farmers, former quota holders and tobacco workers began the transition from a stable, federally run price-support system to a free market of direct contracts with tobacco companies and a globally competitive price structure. The Commission offers grants to help individuals and communities in North Carolina with this transition and to prepare them for the economic opportunities of the next generations.

Announcements about the 2009 WNC AgOptions program will be at www.wncagoptions.org in the upcoming month.

| August 12 | Hay Field Day - Waynesville |
| August 14 | Buncombe County Cattlemen’s Association Meeting |
| September 2 | Madison County Graded Feeder Calf Sale |
| September 16 | Signup Deadline for LFP Disaster Assistance |

Individuals with disabilities who would like to participate in any program mentioned in this newsletter, but who need special assistance to do so, should call the Extension Center at 828-255-5522 at least five days prior to the event.