North Carolina Cattle Assessment Referendum

While the National Beef Checkoff has and continues to be an excellent tool for building the demand for beef in North Carolina and across the U.S., the funds collected in this program are only to be used for a specific purpose – the promotion of beef and the overall beef industry. North Carolina keeps $0.50 from each $1 collected in the state, and these funds can only be used within those specific guidelines that involve the promotion of beef.

On October 6, 2009 there will be a NC Cattle Assessment Referendum. With passage of the referendum, the North Carolina Cattlemen’s Association would collect $1 per head sold in addition to the National Beef Checkoff.

Funds collected from this referendum would stay in North Carolina and allow for the enhancement of programs for our youth, defense against laws and regulations detrimental to the industry, research and education designed to assist in the production of cattle in the state and promotion of North Carolina cattle. Most of these topics are not allowed to be funded under the current National Beef Checkoff system. On an additional note, an equitable portion of these funds will go to the NC Dairy Producers Association to assist with their programs in these areas.

If this referendum passes and if a producer does not wish to participate, he/she may request a refund within 30 days of a sale. The request should be in writing and submitted by mail to the NC Cattlemen’s Association.

There will be an opportunity for absentee voting in addition to the regular on-site voting at the Buncombe County Extension Center. If you have questions regarding this referendum or wish to obtain an absentee ballot, contact Jeff Bradley at 828-255-5522.
WNC AgOptions Announces 2010 Funding Cycle:  
Mountain Farmers Eligible for Funds to Diversify Operations

Grants totaling $225,000 are available to western North Carolina farmers who are diversifying or expanding their operations in 2010. WNC Agricultural Options, which will award approximately 45 farmers in 17 counties and the Cherokee Reservation $3,000, $6,000 or $9,000 each, released its 2010 applications on August 4.

Managed by the N.C. Cooperative Extension County Centers in the West District, the WNC AgOptions program works with producers who demonstrate ways to increase farm income to other transitioning farmers, particularly tobacco growers. WNC AgOptions works in partnership with RAFI-USA’s Tobacco Communities Reinvestment Fund, and the N.C. Tobacco Trust Fund Commission sponsors the program.

“The partnership we have with the WNC AgOptions program is very valuable to us,” said William Upchurch, Executive Director of the Tobacco Trust Fund Commission. “Our experience has shown that participating farmers utilize these grants for innovative, resourceful and profitable enterprises that can make a huge impact on their farming operation.”

“This grant opportunity is an excellent resource to help offset the financial risk for farmers wanting to expand their operations or diversify into crops they may not be very familiar with,” said Ross Young, Madison County Cooperative Extension Director. “The success of small family farms is the focus of this project. By providing financial assistance, this project is enabling farms to create more sustainable farming enterprises, which will have a long-term effect on the economy as well as farmland preservation.”

Interested applicants should see the agricultural agents at their local Extension Centers by November 23, and can visit www.wncagoptions.org to download an application. Projects should increase the sale of farm products and lead to the long-term sustainability of the farm business. The postmark deadline for applications is January 8.

Established in 2003, WNC AgOptions is entering its sixth funding cycle. Members of the WNC AgOptions steering committee include: representatives from NC. Cooperative Extension program, N.C. Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services– Marketing Division, HandMade in America, Appalachian Sustainable Agricultural Project, former WNC AgOptions recipients and other leaders in agribusiness.

Pasture Management Meetings Scheduled

The Buncombe County Center of NC Cooperative Extension is offering two workshops in August for folks who are interested in pasture, hayfield, and/or open space management. The first opportunity is for folks interested in weed management and control. This workshop will be held on Tuesday, August 25, at Southern States, 5850 Asheville Highway, Hendersonville. We will be discussing proper weed identification, which is the first step in a weed management program, and control strategies for eliminating those weeds. There will also be a session on sprayer calibration and soil fertility. The meeting will begin at 5:00 pm with supper and conclude around 7:30 pm. Two hours of pesticide credits are available for licensed applicators. Please call Southern States at 828-687-7725 to register for this event. This will help ensure they prepare enough food for the evening.

The second opportunity is a joint meeting for folks from Buncombe and Henderson Counties. This workshop is designed for equine producers and will cover the basic steps in managing your pastures and hayfields for optimum forage production, including fertility, stocking rates, and rotational grazing. There will also be an industry representative to talk about a deworming program for horses. This meeting will be held at the Buncombe County Extension Center on Thursday, August 27, and will begin at 7:00 pm with supper. Please call Southern States at 828-253-9351 to register for this event. This will help ensure they prepare enough food for the evening. For more information on these events, feel free to contact Jeff Bradley at 828-255-5522.
Herbicide Carryover in Hay and Manure

Many farmers and home gardeners have reported damage to vegetable and flower crops after applying horse or livestock manure, compost, and hay/straw mulch to their crops. The symptoms reported include poor seed germination, death of young plants, twisted leaves, cupped leaves, and reduced yields. While many of these symptoms can be caused by factors such as diseases, insects, and herbicide drift, there is also a possibility that the applied products mentioned above could have the presence of herbicide residues.

There are some herbicides that we commonly use that are in a class known as pyridine carboxylic acids. Aminopyralid, clopyralid, floxpyr, picloram, and triclopyr are all registered for use in our pastures and hayfields for broadleaf weed control. When applied to pastures, these products can be safely consumed by livestock with no grazing restrictions. The chemicals pass through the animal’s digestive tract and are excreted in urine and manure. They can remain active in manure even after it is composted. They can also remain active in hay and straw from treated areas.

The chemicals of greatest concern are picloram, clopyralid, and aminopyralid because they remain active in by-products for unusually long periods of time. Depending on the situation, the herbicides can be deactivated in as few as 30 days; but some reports indicate that breakdown can take as long as three years. When hay/straw mulches or manure is applied to fields or gardens where susceptible plants are grown, devastating damage can occur.

The label on every herbicide provides detailed instructions for use, including animal feeding restrictions and safe use of manure or crop residues. When used as directed, these herbicides will not cause the problems mentioned above. These manures and residues are safe to apply back on grass pastures and hayfields, and that is the only thing they should be used for. One should note that these residues are also devastating to legume crops such as clover and alfalfa and manure or residues should not be applied to fields containing legumes.

The problems arise when folks sell hay or give manure away to friends or neighbors without informing them of their herbicide use and the adverse affects that residues can have on other plants. It is our responsibility as farmers to inform customers, verbally and in writing, that the manure is not to be used as fertilizer for broadleaf or legume crops, and that our hay is not to be used as mulch for broadleaf crops. If you do not know if your herbicide has carryover activity, read the label. All the information you need to know is on the label. Additionally, if you are buying hay for your horses or cattle and wish to use manure for fertilizer later on, be sure to ask your hay supplier of any chemicals applied to their hayfield.

Herbicides registered for use to control broadleaf weeds in pastures and hayfields in North Carolina that contain picloram, clopyralid, and aminopyralid are: Curtail (2,4-D + clopyralid), Forefront (aminopyralid + 2,4-D), Grazon P+D (picloram + 2,4-D), Milestone (aminopyralid), Redeem R&P (triclopyr + clopyralid), and Surmount (picloram + fluoxypyr).

I feel it is important to note that the herbicides listed above are by far some of the most effective chemicals to use when controlling broadleaf weeds in pastures and hayfields. If we will use them responsibly, according to the label, and inform our customers, most of the concerns listed above will be something we will not have to deal with.

Recommendations for the use of agricultural chemicals are included in this publication as a convenience to the reader. The use of brand names and any mention or listing of commercial products or services in this publication does not imply endorsement by North Carolina Cooperative Extension nor discrimination against similar products or services not mentioned. Individuals who use agricultural chemicals are responsible for ensuring that the intended use complies with current regulations and conforms to the product label. Be sure to obtain current information about usage regulations and examine a current product label before applying any chemical. For assistance, contact your county Cooperative Extension agent.
Preconditioning Feeder Calves - Does It Pay?

Are you interested in making more money from your calf crop each year? Based on calf prices in the last year, I think the answer to that should be a resounding YES. Even if prices were what we as beef producers consider acceptable, I think each of us has a bone in our body that tells us we should be getting more for our cattle.

I think folks who have never tried preconditioning have differing opinions on what the true definition of a preconditioning program actually is. That definition is a little flexible, but the most common program consists of a complete health program, which should always include initial and booster vaccinations, deworming, castration, and dehorning if needed. These calves should be weaned and taught to eat out of a feed trough for at least 45 days. Calves will be sorted by sex, weight and quality. Whatever method of preconditioning is used, it is very important for producers to market their cattle in an environment where they will be compensated for the increased value and also fully describe their program to these buyers.

Before you can understand the added value of preconditioned calves, we must look at a few of the factors that affect why these calves are more valuable. Calves that are not preconditioned will tend to lose more weight (shrink) during gathering, sorting, and loading. It is estimated that these calves may shrink about 8% during these three events. That percentage is affected by conditions such as weather, time of day, nearness of working facilities, cattle disposition, and number of cattle to be worked. Preconditioned cattle will have recovered about 6% of this shrink during the preconditioning period, so this alone makes them more attractive to buyers. Preconditioned calves also have a better immune system because they will have been put on a complete health program—this also will add a significant amount of value to these calves.

There is an old saying that says you must spend some money to make some money. Preconditioning your calves is no different. You’ll have costs in your vaccines, dewormer, and feed. Your feed cost will be the biggest variable in how much it costs you to precondition calves. A good estimate on total cost/head over the preconditioning period is around the $60 mark. I realize that sounds high, but you must consider that the calves will be heavier (gain of 2.25 lbs/day) and healthier at sale time which will end up making you more money. It is estimated that preconditioned calves will net you around $30-$60/head. If you sell one calf/year, it’s probably not worth the extra work; but if you market as few as 10 or 15 each year, then you can see that there is some extra money to be made raising calves.

In order for preconditioning to be beneficial to the producer, he/she must:

- Market calves in an environment that will recognize the added value.
- Fully describe the preconditioning program to potential buyers.
- Meet nutritional requirements that will achieve a reasonable weight gain.
- Have enough cattle to achieve truckload lots or pool cattle with other producers to satisfy this requirement.
- Have adequate working facilities to perform preconditioning practices.

There are several outlets to market truckload lots of cattle in Western North Carolina. There are also a lot of good quality cattle out there that should be pooled with other farms who have similar cattle. I think now is the time for us to start working together as producers to market our cattle in a way that will benefit us all. If you have questions about how to precondition your cattle or about marketing your cattle, feel free to call Jeff Bradley at 828-255-5522.
Agriculture in East Tennessee, Southwest Virginia, and Western North Carolina has long been dominated by cow/calf producers. These operations consist of thousands of part-time and full-time beef producers. With the reduced production of tobacco, beef producers have sought other sources of income. Some have intensified the way they manage their beef operations, while others have pursued other alternatives.

Cow/calf producers are exposed to many forms of risk that include drought, fertilizer prices, fuel prices, and feed prices. In addition to these, genetics, herd health, reproduction, and nutrition also play major roles in profits. Some producers have explored alternative marketing methods such as preconditioning calves, carrying calves to heavier weights, selling truckload lots with other producers, and finishing cattle to sell as freezer beef.

There will be a Tri-State Cow/Calf Conference on September 22-23 at the Appalachian fairgrounds in Gray, Tennessee. This conference will address issues to beef producers that will help them in making decisions to reduce risk in the production and marketing of their beef herd. The conference will begin at 1:00 pm on the 22nd with an optional tour of three Tennessee cow/calf farms to show how these producers work to minimize risk and ensure success. The following day will be a trade show and conference with speakers from Texas A & M, Virginia Tech, the University of Tennessee, and the University of Georgia. Producers need to preregister for this event before September 16 to avoid a late fee. To obtain a registration form, drop by the Buncombe County Extension Center or call 828-255-5522 to have one mailed to you.

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**Project Skill-Up**

A program to help you stay in farming, return to farming or get training in an exciting new career.

**Opportunities:**

- New Certificate Program for Farmers
- Special training or education for farming in the 21st century
- Guidance to individuals interested in a new career

**Eligibility:**

Individuals who have roots in Madison and Buncombe counties and who have been affected by changes in tobacco

**Find Out More:** Maureen at 828-254.1921 X 5832

**Project Skill-UP is Offered By:**

Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College
1459 Sand Hill Road
Candler, NC 28715
E-mail: mmacnamara@abtech.edu
Graded Feeder Calf Sale

We are pleased to announce that we will offer a Labor Day Graded Feeder Calf Sale on Monday, September 7, at Edward Johnson Auctioneers Cattle Auction, 120 Livestock Market Drive, Canton. These calves will be graded by a certified grader through the North Carolina Department of Agriculture.

Calves will be separated by breed, sex, grade, and weight. When space is limited, certain breeds may be penned together; however, they will be listed separately on the sale order. Calves are to be castrated, dehorned, and vaccinated at a minimum for blackleg and malignant edema.

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<td>Aug 25</td>
<td>Pasture Management Workshop - 5:00-7:30 pm, Southern States, Hendersonville</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aug 27</td>
<td>Equine Pasture Management Workshop - 7:00 pm, Buncombe County Extension Center</td>
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<td>Sept 3</td>
<td>Pesticide Disposal Day - 10:30 am-2:00 pm, Polk County 4-H Center, 135 Locust Street, Columbus</td>
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<td>Sept 7</td>
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