Trailer Safety Program

Each year, I hear of accidents on the road involving farmers pulling trailers. Whether it is a tire blowing out, a rotten board breaking on the trailer floor, or a sudden stop due to wildlife or traffic in front of us, accidents can and will happen.

Pulling a trailer is something we should not do without some preparation and thought. I know many of us have done it so often and for so long that we tend to take for granted that everything will work exactly the way it is supposed to. We should always prepare for the worst when pulling a trailer. We should also know what the laws are for farmers pulling trailers. There are certain exemptions in place for farmers, but I am sure none of us can quote all of them.

On Thursday, November 19, we are planning a trailer safety program for ALL farmers. The meeting will be held at the WNC Agricultural Center in the Davis Arena and will begin at 6:00 pm. To park at the Davis Arena, you will need to enter Gate 5 off of Hwy. 280.

On hand to discuss trailer safety will be Dr. Jim Turner, Extension Livestock Specialist. He has produced a national trailer safety program for the National Cattlemen's Beef Association and has some good points to talk about on things we should do to prepare for pulling a trailer. Also on hand will be representatives from the North Carolina Highway Patrol. They will address issues that deal with certain laws and exemptions that farmers need to be aware of in order to be legal when pulling a trailer. Keith Cable from Buncombe County Farm Bureau will talk about different types of farm insurance.

NCSU Horse Program

Adults and teens are invited to hear horse specialists from NCSU present information that horse owners across North Carolina have requested. Area Livestock Agent Jeff Bradley will facilitate the interactive broadcast system “Elluminate”.

The next program, “Economical Horse Feeding”, will be presented by Dr. Mike Yoder on Tuesday, November 17, from 7:00-8:00 pm at the Transylvania County Center of North Carolina Cooperative Extension in Brevard. Participants may ask Dr. Yoder questions following his presentation.

Persons with disabilities and persons with limited English proficiency may request accommodations to participate in activities mentioned in this newsletter. Please contact Jeff Bradley at 828-255-5522 during business hours at least 3 days prior to the event to discuss accommodations.
Stockpiled Fescue for Winter Grazing

Dr. Matthew H. Poore
Professor & Extension Ruminant Nutrition Specialist
Department of Animal Science
College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
North Carolina State University

Fescue is a cool season grass that dominates pastures in the Piedmont and Mountains of North Carolina. This grass is very hearty and responds well to fertilization in late summer. If the late summer and fall growth is allowed to accumulate until winter, cows can be efficiently fed without the mud associated with a long winter hay feeding season, and at a very economical cost.

To "stockpile fescue", 50 to 75 lbs per acre of N is applied to a healthy fescue field in late August to early September. It is important to graze or clip the fescue to about 3 to 4 inches and then let it rest several weeks before fertilizer is applied. It is also important to make sure that other soil nutrients including phosphorus and potassium are at least at medium levels and that pH is about 6.0 if you want to get the best response.

The timing of rainfall is a critical issue in how much fall growth you will accumulate. It is important to get the fertilizer on ahead of rain, so if you see a wet pattern coming, get the fertilizer out. Sometimes there are only 3 or 4 good rains in a fall season, and having that fertilizer out early will help you capitalize on early rains that might come. By November you will know how much winter forage you will have to graze. In a normal year you can expect about 2,000 to 3,000 lbs of grazable forage dry matter per acre. This is an equivalent amount of feed to about four to six 4’ x 4’ round bales of hay per acre.

A 1,200 lb gestating cow can be maintained on about 20 lbs of stockpiled fescue dry matter daily, so with 25% waste, one acre would feed 75 to 110 cows for one day. Lactating cows will need 30 lbs, so an acre would have 50 to 75 “cow days”. Another way of looking at this is that 1 acre of typical stockpiled fescue will run a lactating cow for 50 to 75 days. The nutritional value of stockpiled fescue is near the requirement of a lactating cow, so often with good management, only a mineral supplement is needed.

It is important to manage stockpiled fescue to minimize waste during grazing. Using a technique called “frontal or strip-grazing” cows are allotted a strip of grass using a roll of polywire and temporary posts every one to three days. When they graze to the target height of 2 inches they are fed another strip. Cows are started on an area near the water source and given fresh strips moving away from the water source.

Managing cows in a strip-grazing system has two other key advantages. One is that manure is distributed more evenly on the pasture than with a typical hay feeding system which is important in building better soil fertility. The other is that cows stay cleaner and mud is less of a problem which likely improves calf health. In fact, calves creep under a single strand of polywire to graze and bed ahead of the cows.

As part of our drought management/pasture management initiative, we are planning a “Pasture Walk” at two different locations. The first pasture walk will be held on Wednesday, December 2, at the Everett Farm in Pisgah Forest. This pasture walk will begin at 1:00 pm. The second pasture walk will be held on Wednesday, January 13, at the TK Brown Farm in Black Mountain. This meeting will begin at 3:00 pm in order to have enough daylight to see the demonstration.

The purpose of these meetings is to allow producers to see how grazing stockpiled forage works. If you have any questions regarding these pasture walks, call Jeff Bradley at 828-255-5522. See directions to each farm below.

**Directions to T. K. Brown’s Farm – 641 North Fork Road:**
Take I-40 East from Asheville. Take Exit 59 toward Swannanoa. Turn left at Patton Cove Road (at end of exit ramp). Turn right onto US-70. Travel 2.4 miles; turn left onto Grovestone Road and travel .3 mile. Grovestone Road becomes North Fork Road. Travel 2.4 miles to 641 North Fork Road.

**Directions to Everett Farms – 1636 Everett Road:**
Take Hwy 64 to Crab Creek Road in Pisgah Forest. Take Crab Creek Road about 1.5 miles to Everett Road. Turn right on Everett Road and continue 1.5 miles to 1636 Everett Road.
North Carolina Cattle Industry Assessment Referendum Passes

The cattle producers of North Carolina voted to reactivate the North Carolina Cattle Industry Assessment. Voting was conducted throughout the state with oversight by North Carolina Cooperative Extension. After tallying by Extension personnel, the vote was 839 for, 306 against, and 3 illegible ballots, exceeding the two thirds majority required for passage.

Implementation of the assessment will begin on January 1, 2010. The funds collected will be used in the following five areas: Youth Development, Research, Education, Promotion, and Issues Management. Both beef and dairy segments will have funds based on collections to use in these five areas within their respective industries.

The funding in the Youth Development area will help to offer educational and leadership opportunities to our farm youth as well as to help empower them to be spokespersons to their contemporaries. Research opportunities will also be funded to assist producers in staying on the cutting edge of production and efficiency in their operations. Educational programs will also be funded to assist producers throughout North Carolina with access to the latest information concerning the cattle industry. Additional funds for promotion will allow us to better acquaint consumers with the beef product and the producers who provide it, while being environmentally conscious and using the latest in animal husbandry practices. Funding in the Issues Management area will allow the North Carolina Cattlemen’s Association to not only defend against attacks by activist organizations on our industry, but also to inform elected officials and government regulators as to the importance of cattle production to the economy and our way of life in North Carolina.

Everett Johnson, president of the North Carolina Cattlemen’s Association, would like to express his appreciation to the producers for their support of the referendum. Everett states that he looks forward to the opportunity of prudently using the funds collected to support the cattle industry through educational programs and advocacy while enhancing the image of the cattle industry in the state. Wayne Lutz, president of the North Carolina Dairy Producers Association, expressed his encouragement that producers of beef from both the beef and dairy industries have expressed their willingness to invest in the future of the cattle industry in the state and to provide the consumer with the safest and most wholesome beef possible.

Projects within these five areas will be considered regularly as funding is available. Please consider programs that you would like to be considered with this funding and discuss them with the staff or leadership of the North Carolina Cattlemen’s Association or the North Carolina Dairy Producers Association.

ATTENTION DAIRY PRODUCERS!!!

WNC Animal Waste Applicator Continuing Education Training

Dairymen who fall under the North Carolina 0.200 regulations are required to obtain six hours of continuing education credits. Most of you received three hours in our July training. We are planning another three-hour training on Tuesday, December 15, at the Haywood County Center of North Carolina Cooperative Extension. The session will begin at 6:00 pm with dinner and will conclude at 9:00 pm.

In order to obtain the credits necessary for you to keep your license current, you MUST attend this training if you still need three hours of continuing education.

Directions from Asheville:

Take I-40 west about 20 miles to Exit 27 (Hwys 19 - 23 - 74). Continue straight for 3 miles to Exit 104. Circle around to the right, under the highway and continue for 2.2 miles. Make a left onto Ratcliff Cove Road. Continue 0.5 mile and bear right onto Raccoon Road. Proceed 0.5 mile to the Haywood Agricultural Center on the left across from the Waynesville Test Farm.
Make Body Condition Scoring a Routine Practice

James B. Neel
Professor and Extension Beef Cattle Specialist
Department of Animal Science
University of Tennessee

Body condition scoring (BCS) is a practice that should be carried out at the weaning of the calf crop along with pregnancy checking and cow culling. Body Condition Scores are indicators of the cows’ nutritional condition.

Body Condition Scoring uses a numerical value to estimate energy on fat reserves. The values range from 1 to 9. Cows in the lower numbers (1, 2 or 3) have less energy stores and are considered skinny. Cows with BCS scores of 4, 5 or 6 are average, and the cows in 7, 8 and 9 range can be easily recognized as fat.

Body Condition Score at calving has an important impact on the future calf crop. Mature cows should be in a BCS of 5 while first calf replacement heifers should be in a BCS of 6.

Females in a BCS less than 5 for mature cows and 6 for heifers will experience reduced reproductive performance. For example, cows that are in the thin group will be longer returning to heat following calving compared to those in the average BCS. (If cows are not cycling, they are not going to settle.) This delay in returning to heat delays rebreeding and the future calf crop will be born at a later date, and if weaned at the same time next year will be lighter. Cows that are in the thin group should be separated and fed and managed to gain up to the average BCS.

Producers should observe the cows throughout the annual production cycle. BCS should be done at weaning, at two to three months before calving, at calving and at other times throughout the year. These periodic checks allow the producer to make adjustments in nutrition and management practices to improve BCS before calving. By scoring the cows at weaning, they can be sorted into these groups for fall and winter feeding. The thin cows can be fed to gain weight, the average cows can be maintained, and the fat cows can lose condition.

Why are the cows in a thin BCS? The answer is inadequate nutritional intake. Aged cows (10 years plus) are likely to be in a thin BCS. This low score can be attributed to poor physical condition that includes arthritis, structural problems and loss of teeth. While working the cows, check their physical soundness. Unless these thin, old cows are separated from the other cows, they will not be able to secure their nutritional needs and continue to lose in physical condition. A high percentage of these cows will not live to see the green grass next spring. These cows should also be candidates for culling and marketing.

Body condition of the cows directly affects the reproductive performance of the cow herd and the profitability of the cow herd. Grouping the cows into 3 BCS groups can be easily done and would fit most beef cow herds. Observe your cows at weaning and determine their BCS because it will affect the herd’s profitability.

If you have questions or need help regarding the BCS scores of your cattle, contact Jeff Bradley at 828-255-5522.

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<tr>
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Did you know that you can get this newsletter via email? If you are interested, please contact us either by phone at 828-255-5522 or email at deanna_jordan@ncsu.edu.
Managing Your Hay Inventory

James B. Neel
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Hay is the primary winter feed for most cow-calf herds. The hay supply on most beef farms contains batches of varying kinds and varies in nutrient content. (Gill, W.W. et al 2000). Feeding these differing batches to the “right class” of cattle at the “right time” is critical if a producer is to achieve the maximum benefit of the feed while economically meeting the nutritional needs of all the cattle on the farm.

Managing the available hay is critical since each herd has several “classes” of cattle. These include: young calves, growing replacement heifers, mature brood cows in early pregnancy or a maintenance state, pregnant cows in their last trimester, and lactating females. The nutritional demands of animals in each of these classes vary considerably from those in other classes. Additionally, the ability to digest fibrous feeds is low in young animals but improves as their digestive system matures. Proper management of the hay supply allows producers to utilize all the various kinds of reasonable quality hay to meet the various needs of each of the classes of cattle.

Following are brief discussions of some items that should be followed in managing the hay supply and planning and carrying out a winter feeding program.

- **“A forage test is the first step in planning and managing a winter feeding program.”** A forage test is essential in making cost-effective feeding decisions. The nutrient content of hay on most farms varies. A forage test provides an indication of the quality (nutrient density) of hay. A forage analysis allows the producer to formulate and feed balanced rations. Test each batch of hay. Test hay each year for crude protein and total digestible nutrients (TDN).

- **“Young animals need the higher quality hay.”** Hay made from forages cut in the early boot stage contains high levels of protein, energy, and vitamins, and it is easily digestible. It is not uncommon to find protein levels as high as 16 percent in hay harvested at this stage of growth if was properly fertilized and baled without excessive weather exposure. The gut of young animals is not very efficient in utilizing the tough fibers found in more mature plants; therefore, feeding hay cut in the early boot stage is ideally suited for them.

- **“Older cattle can get along on mature, tougher hay.”** The quality of feed needed by cattle decreases as they mature. They are better able to digest more fibrous plants than young cattle. It makes sense to feed more mature animals those lots of hay which were cut after the boot stage and/or baled after being rained on or after long exposure to the sun, all of which lower the nutritional content of the feed. These hays will probably require supplementation. Again, make the feeding decisions based on forage test results.

- **“Brood cows in last stage of pregnancy and those nursing calves require more and higher quality feed.”** In the first two thirds of pregnancy, the beef female is basically in a state of maintenance in terms of her nutritional needs. As the fetus grows in the last trimester more nutrients are needed. This allows for the feeding of lower-quality feeds to mature cows in the first and second trimester, and to those animals in a truly maintenance state such as bulls. As pregnant brood cows enter the last trimester, and then lactation, the quality of the hay fed should be increased to meet their increasing nutritional requirements.

- **“Save the better quality hay for feeding the last part of winter.”** With the exception of young, growing stock, this is a repeat of what has already been said. For the mature females in the herd, (pregnant beef brood cows), feed the poorest quality hay first when their nutritional needs are lowest. This is the time that mature brood cows can utilize crop residue, such as corn stalks, to help meet nutritional needs. Increase the quality of the hay as their needs and the demands and effects of winter increase. For the younger calves, just the opposite is true. Feed them the best you’ve got when they are the youngest and slowly lower the quality, as they progress through the winter. Just remember—even a yearling heifer needs about the same amount of as a mature beef cow in the last trimester of pregnancy.

- **“Cows nursing calves require more and a higher quality feed.”** Selecting replacement heifers based on both increased frame size and milk production results in females going into herds that require a ration of greater nutrient density and more of it than the current mature cows in the herd. Regardless of their age or stage of lactation, the nutritional requirements of large, high-milk-producing cows demand that they be fed the best quality forage the year around. A large number of Tennessee beef farms do not have this quality of hay available and as a consequence, production suffers, especially in reproduction. The producer needs to make some adjustments, either improve the forage supply or develop a calving season that will allow the greatest percentage of nutrients to be met by grazing high quality forage. With some planning and management, different quality hay can be effectively and economically utilized to meet nutritional needs of the cattle herd during the winter. This would also aid the producer in reducing costs.

If you have questions regarding forage testing, please call Jeff Bradley at 828-255-5522.
WNC AgOptions Grants for Farmers - Deadlines Approaching

INTENT TO APPLY DEADLINE: November 23, 2009!!!
Contact Your Local Extension Agent Now! - Deadline for Grant Application: January 8, 2010!!

Award recipients are encouraged to explore crop diversification, ways to replace lost tobacco income and marketing & production techniques that demonstrate economic sustainability.

The grant will be provided by the NC Tobacco Trust Fund Commission, which will partner with Rural Advancement Foundation International (RAFI) and the WNC Agricultural Options program to accept applications and monitor the recipients’ projects. Through this partnership, WNC AgOptions, a program established in 2004 and managed by NC Cooperative Extension Centers in the West District, will continue assisting mountain farmers transitioning from tobacco and other crops through 2011.

Examples of past WNC AgOptions projects include:
- Transition from tobacco production to ornamentals, berries, trout farms or agritourism;
- Improvements of existing operations, including horse boarding, mum production and choose-and-cut Christmas trees;
- Creative markets for livestock, including goats for invasive plants removal, grass-finished beef and naturally grown pork;
- Beekeeping, including integrated pest management and queen-rearing;
- Native plants nursery start-ups;
- Season extension for vegetables.

Interested farmers and representatives of agricultural cooperatives or associations may obtain applications from their local NC Cooperative Extension Center or at www.wncagoptions.org.

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- Beekeeping, including integrated pest management and queen-rearing;
- Native plants nursery start-ups;
- Season extension for vegetables.

Previous grant recipients may apply again. There is an application on the website for previous recipients. Please make sure you fill out the correct application! They are encouraged to contact their local agricultural Extension agent by November 23 to discuss and research their project. Applications must be postmarked by January 8. Award recipients will be announced in February.