In January, I discussed my goal in trying to answer this question with help from the folks within the farming community. Since that time, I have been addressed by many about the need for accessible farmland. In western North Carolina and other areas throughout the country, there is a drive to preserve working farmland by perfecting established enterprises and developing new enterprises. While this is effective for farms with an active operator, many farms are operated by someone ready to step back with no successor identified to take over. I am wondering from you landowners/farm owners that are no longer farming how we can get your land back into production through mentoring, leasing or purchasing opportunities.

As the Buncombe County Small Farms Extension Agent, I am working on developing a “linking” database that can be used by folks to communicate their available opportunities or their needs for productive land. It will initially be a pilot program for Buncombe and surrounding counties, with hopes of expanding throughout the entire region. Applications for both landowners and land seekers will be available. Until the website is up and running, feel free to contact me directly.

I look forward to hearing from you and appreciate your patience during the development process.

Melinda D. Roberts
828.255.5522
When to Cull Your Cattle

Deciding which cows to cull and which cows to keep can impact future herd performance and profitability. Production and market conditions can influence the priority that is placed on different culling criteria. The challenge in selecting cull cows is identifying the cows that make money and those that do not. Recognition and assessment of poor animal performance or other factors that call for animal culling require organized data collection and record keeping. The keys to an effective record keeping system are: 1) decide what production and financial information is useful and practical to collect, 2) collect accurate information in a timely manner, 3) manage that information in a usable form and 4) use the information.

Culling Criteria:

- Pregnancy Status or reproductive rate
- Poor Performance
- Age
- Mouth
- Udder
- Structural Soundness
- Health
- Prolapse
- Disposition

Appropriate Time to Cull

Appropriate times to cull cows from the herd depend in part on the reasons behind the culling. In cases where cows have developed severe health problems removal from the herd may need to be immediate. In situations where cows are being culled for low performance or other less urgent factors, it often makes sense to wait until after nursing calves are weaned. If marketing conditions are such that even cows weaning low performing calves are generating a profit, it may be cost effective to hold onto these cows in the near term and then market them before they become unprofitable. Production conditions can also influence the best time to remove cows from the herd. During drought or other conditions where forage and feed resources are limited, culling deeper into the herd is often appropriate.

Selection Checklist

Reproduction

- Is she pregnant or open?
- Does she breed back in an acceptable time frame and produce a calf every year?
- Is she too extreme in her muscling pattern?
- Is her frame size or pelvic area too small, making calving difficulty a real concern?
- Is she healthy and in good condition for breeding?
- Is there a history of vaginal prolapse?

Functionality in a given environment

- Is her frame size too large for feed and forage conditions?
- Is her milking potential excessive for feed and forage conditions?
- Is she an easy keeper (keeps flesh and condition with proper nutrition)?

- Does she have adequate body capacity for carrying a calf and consuming large quantities of forage/feed?
- Is her breed composition suited to the environment?
- Is her disposition manageable with available labor and facilities?

Maternal traits

- Does she exhibit desirable maternal instincts (licks off calf at birth, readily accepts nursing calf, etc.?)
- Does she milk adequately for acceptable calf growth

Structural soundness

- Are her feet and legs structurally sound for ease of movement under pasture and breeding conditions?
- Does she have desirable slope to her shoulders (not too straight)?
- Are her hips level from hooks to pins?
- Are her eyes healthy?
- Is her udder healthy with a level floor and good suspension?
- Does she have four evenly-spaced, acceptably sized teats?
- Does she still have teeth that will be effective for grazing?

Marketability of traits passed on to calves

- Does she have the potential to produce calves that fit market specifications for frame size, muscling, conformation and structure, breed composition, coat color, etc?
- Does she have the potential to transmit desirable post weaning growth to calves marketed for stocker or backgrounding programs?
- Does she have the potential to transmit desirable carcass traits to calves marketed for finishing programs that pay premiums for carcass merit?

Performance Potential

- Do performance test results indicate desirable performance over her lifetime (acceptable Most Probable Producing Ability values and calving intervals)?
- If her calf did not perform well, was it due to the genetics or milking ability of the dam? (Calf health problems and sire genetics can contribute to this)
- Does she have acceptable Expected Progeny Differences (EPDs) or economically relevant traits (seedstock operations)?

Summary

Cow culling strategies impact both calf quantity and quality and, when designed and implemented effectively, can greatly enhance the profitability of a cow-calf operation. Making informed culling decisions helps maintain a high level of herd performance. Herd genetic improvement involves not only proper bull and replacement heifer selection, but also proper selection and timely removal of cull cows from the herd. Even favorite cows should be subject to a systematic culling process to improve cow herd profitability. Contact your local county Extension office for more information on cow culling or related topics.

Information taken from ‘Culling the Beef Cow Herd’, Jeremy Powell, Univ. of Ark.
**Present Use Value Program**

The North Carolina General Assembly enacted the Present Use Value Program, which allows reduced tax assessments for individually owned property used for agriculture, horticulture or forestry. Property accepted into this program is taxed at its “present use value” as a farm. This value is usually less than the market value of the property. The difference between the market value and the present use value is “deferred”. When the property or a portion of the property is removed from the program for any reason, the deferred taxes for the current year and the previous three years plus interest becomes due. Applications for this program are taken during the listing period in January of each year. Basic eligibility requirements follow:

**Agricultural**

Agricultural use is land that is a part of a farm unit actively engaged in the commercial production or growing of crops, plants, or animals under a sound management program. The requirements for an agricultural deferment are as follows:

- One tract must consist of at least 10 acres that are in actual production of agricultural products.
- May consist of more than one tract of agricultural land, but at least one of the tracts must meet the requirements and each tract must be under a sound management program.
- Must have produced an average gross income from agricultural products of at least one thousand dollars ($1,000) per year for the three years preceding January 1 of the year in which this benefit is claimed. Gross income includes income from the sale of the agricultural products produced from the land and any payments received under a governmental soil conservation or land retirement program.
- If individually owned, the property must be the owner’s residence or have been owned by the current owner or a relative of the current owner for four years preceding January 1 of the year in which this benefit is claimed.

**Forestland**

Forestland use is land that is part of a forest unit that is actively engaged in the commercial growing of trees under a sound management program. The requirements for a forestland deferment are as follows:

- One tract must consist of at least 20 acres that are in actual production of trees.
- May consist of more than one tract of forestland, but at least one of the tracts must meet the requirements and each tract must be under a sound management program.
- If individually owned, the property must be the owner’s residence or have been owned by the current owner or a relative of the current owner for four years preceding January 1 of the year in which this benefit is claimed.

If property loses its eligibility for any reason, deferred taxes become due for the current year plus three previous years, plus interest for all prior years. If only a part of the qualifying tract loses its eligibility, a determination shall be made of the amount of deferred taxes applicable to that part, and that amount shall become payable with interest.

Keith Miller, the Chief Appraiser/Real Estate Department Supervisor manages the existing program and assists the staff with the daily issues related to the program and the program participants. The County is divided into geographical areas with an appraiser assigned to each area. Any property owner requesting more information or needing assistance may contact Keith directly at (828)250-4949 or keith.miller@buncombecounty.org or may call the appraiser assigned to the area where the property is located. (I have a copy of this map and can assist you with that information by calling me at the extension office). Any additional information on the Use Value Program can be obtained from any of the following links:

USDA OFFERS COST-SHARE SIGNUP

The Buncombe USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service Office is now accepting sign-ups for farmers interested in doing conservation work on their farms. Applications will be available in the Buncombe Soil and Water Conservation District Office. The NRCS/Soil and Water Office is located at 155 Hilliard Ave. Asheville, NC.

Farmers with erosion or water quality issues can address those problems using the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). This program cost-shares up to 75% of the cost of doing practices such as watering tanks, fencing, critical area seeding, and a whole host of other conservation practices.

Another good program is the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program. This program is designed to address stream erosion issues thought the establishment of tree and shrub species along eroding stream banks. This program is jointly administered with the USDA-Farm Services Agency, NRCS, and the N. C. Forest Service.

To find out more about any of these cost-share programs, call Mr. Loring McIntyre in the Buncombe Soil and Water Conservation District Office. The phone number is 250-4790.

TAKE ADVANTAGE of the Farm Business Planning Support That is Available

Interested in projecting cash flow for your farm for the coming year? Want to know whether a possible new farm enterprise looks like it could make money? Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP) has farm business planning services available for farms in Western North Carolina. ASAP cannot provide production advice, so you’ll need to supply information on expected yields prices, input and equipment costs, etc., and they will help you pull it all together into formats that make sense and that will help you make decisions about your farm. You may be too busy now, but ASAP does get many requests in the winter months and it is good to make contact and schedule ahead.

If this is something you are interested in contact Peter Marks at (828) 236-1282 - peter@asapconnections.org, or Melinda Roberts at (828) 255-5522 – melinda_roberts@ncsu.edu

PESTICIDE FEE INCREASES

With the signing of the 2010-2011 State Budget by Governor Beverly Perdue on June 30, 2010, the General Assembly has mandated fees for administered examinations and an increase in licensing fees in accordance to General Statutes 143-448, 143-452, and 143-455 of the NC Pesticide Law of 1971.

The fees below went into effect July 14th 2010

EXAMINATION FEES
(Applies to all Testers, regardless of license type)

Core, Dealer, Worker Protection Designated Trainer, Aerial, and Consultant………..$50.00

Ornamental and Turf, Right of Way, Forestry, Public Health, Ag Pest Animal, Pet Grooming, Poultry, Ag Pest Plant, Seed Treatment, Demonstration and Research, Wood Treatment, Regulatory, and Aquatic...........$20.00

Private.................................................................$10.00

LICENSE FEES

(026) Ground, (027, 028, 029) Aerial, (030) Consultant, (033) Public Utility, and (037) Dealer..............................................................$75.00

(038) Private Applicator...........................................$10.00

(031, 032) Public.........................................................No Charge

Aircraft Inspections.......................................................$25.00
Greetings to you from my new home here in western North Carolina! It was about a year ago this time that I was in the state teaching and educating small farmers about *standard bred poultry* (what we also refer to as heritage poultry) at poultry field days, poultry production workshops and pastured poultry conferences. One very specific speaking engagement was with ISAMPA and they reserved a room for me at the *Hampton Inn in Marion*...little did I know that I would meet lovely Melissa that night and be married to her a year later! I am a blessed man and thrilled to be here in WNC!

During all of those teaching engagements, which also included the *Organic Growers School* in UNC Asheville, I connected with many small farmers who are passionate about poultry and interested in raising standard bred poultry for sustainable farming, marketing, exhibition & preservation. Many of you expressed interest in being a part of our 2011 *WNC Heritage Poultry Projects* – that is why I am sending you this letter!

As you hopefully know, the ISAMPA processing plant in Marion is under construction! I visited the site a few days ago and the contractors were there and working hard! It was very exciting to see. So now, the hurdle of getting our poultry processed locally is cleared! We also have a *mobile processing unit* that is available for your on farm processing’ if you choose to do so.

So, I want to officially invite you to be a part of this project. I have enclosed a questionnaire for you to fill out and return as soon as possible.

*Jim Adkins*
Sustainable Poultry Specialist

**Here are some of the BENEFITS for you as a farmer to participate in the project:**

- To participate in protecting & promoting standard bred poultry in WNC.
- To build a sustainable flock of heritage poultry of your own without depending on the large producer of commercial poultry to provide birds for you. The commercial industry is not locally owned. And commercial, hybrid poultry are not sustainable.
- To learn about genetics, welfare & environment of raising healthy, sustainable heritage poultry.
- Receive education from poultry experts through training events, personal coaching & mentoring on small farms including your own!
- To provide local consumers & restaurants with poultry meat & eggs that is produced properly, with the original intent of the fowl and what it was bred for.
- And, to provide consumers and restaurants with the outstanding flavor of fresh eggs and poultry meat that was raise at the actual time span necessary for tasting turkey and chicken. Remember: Time always increases flavor!

**Project Purpose:** The purpose of the Heritage Poultry Project is to promote & protect heritage breeds of poultry to be used for the purpose of meat in the marketplace; and to encourage local, sustainable poultry farming.

**PLEASE SEE REVERSE SIDE FOR QUESTIONNAIRE**
Small Poultry Farmer Questionnaire  
2011 WNC Heritage Poultry Projects

Name: ____________________________________________________________________________________

Farm name: (if different) __________________________________________________________________

Address: __________________________________________________________________________________

City: ______________________________________ State: _______________ Zip:_____________

Phone: _______________________________ Email: _______________________________

1) Why are you interested in the *Heritage Poultry Projects*?


3) How many would you like to raise in 2011? __________________________

4) Do you already sell poultry from your farm to local consumers or restaurants? If so, what kind of poultry and how many do you sell? Please explain.

5) Are you currently a breeder of standard bred poultry? (Are you reproducing your own birds through breeding, incubating and rearing your young?) If not, are interested in becoming a provider for local producers?

6) Are you a member of ISAMPA?  
   YES____
   NO____

7) Will you attend the organizational meeting on Saturday, October 23rd (3:30PM) at the *Mountain Horticulture Crops Research & Extension Center* in Mills River, NC?  
   ________ YES
   ________ NO, I cannot attend but I would like to participate in the Heritage Poultry Project in 2011. Please keep me posted of the details.

Please mail or email this questionnaire to:  

*Jim Adkins*  
642 Moffitt Hill Road  
Old Fort, North Carolina 28762  
209.890.5326  
Centre4poultry@aol.com
Upcoming Events

October 18 Using Facebook and Twitter for Your Farm, Nursery or Landscaping Business. 6pm – 8pm at Blue Ridge Community College. Contact Ivy at Henderson County Cooperative Extension office to register or for more info, (828)697-4891 or ivy_olson@ncsu.edu.

October 23 Heritage Poultry Project Planning Meeting. 3:30 pm at the Mountain Horticulture Crops Research and Extension Center, Mills River, NC. This will be our organizational, informational gathering for you to officially join this movement of protecting & promoting standard bred poultry back into the marketplace.

October 25 Using Blogger for Your Farm, Nursery or Landscaping Business. 6pm – 8pm at Blue Ridge Community College. Contact Ivy Olson at Henderson County Cooperative Extension office to register or for more info, (828)697-4891 or ivy_olson@ncsu.edu.

November 1 WNC AgOption Intent to Apply Deadline. For more information, visit www.wncagoptions.org.

November 1 Appalachian State Viticulture Workshop. 8:30am - 4:30pm at the Broyhill Inn and Conference Center, Boone, NC. For additional information, http://bit.ly/9g5rHv, or contact Franya Hutchins at 828.262.8158.

November 9 The Secrets of Marketing and Selling Success. 8:30 – 4:30pm at the Virginia Boone Building at the Western NC Agricultural Center in Fletcher, NC. Registration information is available at www.ncagr.gov/markets/agbizmarketing.htm or call Annette Dunlap in the NCDA&CS Market Division at (919) 733-7887.

November 13 New Frontiers in Beekeeping. 9am – 5pm, Folk Art Center, Milepost 382 on the Blue Ridge Parkway, Asheville, NC. The Western North Carolina Center for Honeybee Research invites you to a little late fall color with an all day honeybee extravaganza! New Frontiers in Beekeeping will present cutting-edge perspectives from four of the field’s premier experts: Marla Spivak, Jamie Ellis, Debbie Delaney and Jay Evans. To register online go to www.brownapertickets.com/event/130103. Event contact, Carl Chesick, (828)779-7047.

November 18 Greenhouse Growers Workshop for Ornamental and Vegetable Producers. 9am - 4pm at the Mountain Horticulture Crops Research and Extension Center, Mills River, NC. This day-long workshop is for greenhouse growers of ornamental plants or vegetables. We have an exciting line-up of topics and speakers: releasing biologicals in the greenhouse, greenhouse vegetable varieties, innovative container options, and more! The cost for the workshop will be $10 per person and this includes lunch. Pesticide credits will be available. For more information, (828)255-5522 or http://buncombe.ces.ncsu.edu.

November 22 WNC AgOptions Grant Proposal Application Deadline. For more information visit www.wncagoption.org.

December 3 – 5 Sustainable Agriculture Conference. Event will be held in Winston Salem, NC. For more information, visit http://carolinafarmstewards.org/sac10.shtml.

Other Events to Watch For:
• Internal Parasite Workshop series
• CSA Workshop (ASAP and Cooperative Extension)
• Value Added and Alternative Agriculture Workshop Series
• 2011 Regional Agritourism Conference
• Market Scale Calibrations with NCDA

Current Grant and Money Opportunities are available on the Buncombe County Small Farms Initiative Website at: http://buncombe.ces.ncsu.edu.
Buncombe County Small Farms Initiative

More and more farmers have been sharing with our agents their desire to continue farming, as well as the challenges they are facing in doing so. Farmers are desperately looking for ways to increase their income so they can keep their operation viable and their land preserved. Support given by our Buncombe County Commissioners and County Management has allowed the Cooperative Extension to develop a Small Farms Initiative program to aggressively work towards helping both seasoned and new farmers.

Melinda Roberts
Extension Agent
Agriculture-Small Farms

http://buncombe.ces.ncsu.edu

You can get this newsletter via email. Contact us either by phone at 828-255-5522 or email: Melinda_Roberts@ncsu.edu