

LIVESTOCK NEWS

A NEWSLETTER PROVIDING INFORMATION FOR LIVESTOCK PRODUCERS IN
BUNCOMBE, HENDERSON & POLK COUNTIES

Buncombe County Center

Fall 2013

Inside This Issue

- 2014 WNC Ag Options Applications Available, p.1
- Peak Season Soil Testing Fee Beginning December, p.3
- Bull Breeding Soundness Exams, p.3
- BSE, p.4
- Martin's Abattoir Suspends Production @ Sampson Co Plant, p.7
- Coming Events, p.7
- Carolina Meat Conference, p.8

Contact Us

Ethan G. Henderson
Extension Area Agent
Agriculture-Livestock, Dairy,
Horses, Forages
Buncombe, Henderson
and Polk Counties

North Carolina
Cooperative Extension
Buncombe County Center
94 Coxe Avenue
Asheville, NC 28801-3620

Phone: (828) 255-5522
Fax: (828) 255-5202

<http://buncombe.ces.ncsu.edu>

Distributed in furtherance of the acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914. North Carolina State University and North Carolina A&T State University commit themselves to positive action to secure equal opportunity regardless of race, color, creed, national origin, religion, sex, age, veteran status or disability. In addition, the two Universities welcome all persons without regard to sexual orientation. North Carolina State University, North Carolina A&T State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and local governments cooperating.

Buncombe County Center, 94 Coxe Avenue, Asheville, NC 28801-3620 • 828.255.5522 • FAX: 828.255.5202
Henderson County Center, 100 Jackson Park Road, Hendersonville, NC 28792-4470 • 828.697.4891 • FAX: 828.697.4581
Polk County Center, PO Box 187, Columbus, NC 28722-0187 • 828.894.8218 • FAX: 828.894.5693

Applications for WNC Ag Options 2014 Farms Available

**Grant Opportunity for Western North Carolina Farmers
WNC AgOptions Intent to Apply Deadline Nov. 1; Application Deadline Dec. 13**

Program Contact: Jennifer Ferre, (828) 252-4783, admin@wncagoptions.org or the local N.C. Cooperative Extension Agriculture Agent
Media Contact: Megan Riley, (828) 333-4151, info@wncagoptions.org

ASHEVILLE - WNC Agricultural Options' 10th annual grant cycle is underway. With funding from the N.C. Tobacco Trust Fund Commission, WNC AgOptions will award a total of \$153,000 to diversifying farmers in western North Carolina in 2014. Farmers have until December 13 to submit an application for a \$3,000 or \$6,000 grant.

"The 2014 funding cycle will represent a decade of service to our agricultural industry through farmer grants, educational seminars and technical assistance," said Ross Young, Madison County Extension Director and WNC AgOptions steering committee leader. "Since 2004, more than 350 farmer grants and several community grants have been awarded. We are extremely grateful to the N.C. Tobacco Trust Fund Commission as the sole funder of this program since its inception."

The Commission has helped ensure that farmers continue farming during changes in the industry in the past 25 years. "The N.C. Tobacco Trust Fund Commission works hard to provide benefits to communities affected by changes in the tobacco industry," said William H. (Bill) Teague, chairman of the Commission. "The WNC AgOptions program has been consistent and effective in helping western North Carolina farmers carry out innovative and income-producing ideas."



The Buncombe County Center of NC Cooperative Extension will hold two workshops for people interested in applying for the WNC AgOptions grant. Both programs will be offered at the Buncombe Extension Center located at 94 Coxe Avenue in Asheville.

Tuesday - October 22 - 6:00 pm
Wednesday - October 23 - 9:00 am

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

NC State University
A&T State University
**COOPERATIVE
EXTENSION**

Empowering People · Providing Solutions

Since 2004, WNC AgOptions has distributed more than \$1.6 million to farmers in western North Carolina who are diversifying their operations. These small grants often turn farms toward profitability, as well as make significant economic impacts in the surrounding communities.

The fruits of the initial investments are often immediate, as new income typically matches the size of the grants in the first year of the projects. Data from 156 farmers who received grants in the past four years reveals that their projects resulted in a total of \$1.15 million of new farm income in the first year alone. Income continues to increase year after year, doubling by the third year of the projects.

Embedded in the 10-year WNC AgOptions history are stories of hundreds of farmers' lives changed for the better.

Tracy McMahan of Mt. Mitchell Produce in Watauga County



Traci McMahan of Mt. Mitchell Produce in Yancey County, a 2012 WNC AgOptions recipient, is still expanding to keep up with the demand that arose after she improved her certified organic lettuce operation.

Following the purchase of a refrigerated transport unit, the farm quickly doubled the number of produce boxes distributed, now selling to 10 Ingles supermarkets and local restaurants. Two of her employees transitioned from part-time to full-time to help with the workload.

Jill Nicklaw of Sunshine Cove Farm in Watauga County

Jill Nicklaw of Sunshine Cove Farm in Watauga County, a 2011 WNC AgOptions recipient, not only made back her initial investment in a 1,000-square-foot greenhouse in the first year of her project, but also doubled her income in 2012 and was able to hire two employees.

She sells microgreens to seven brokers, including Eastern Carolina Organic and New River Organic Growers, as well to individuals and restaurants.



Applications for the 2014 grant cycle are available at www.wncagoptions.org and at local Cooperative Extension Centers. **Interested applicants should contact their local Extension Agents by November 1** to notify them that they intend to apply. Extension Agents work closely with the recipients throughout the grant cycle, giving them moral support and answering questions.

WNC AgOptions welcomes four more counties to its now 22-county/unit coverage area: Burke, Caldwell, Cleveland and Rutherford. Other eligible counties are: Avery, Buncombe, Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Swain, Transylvania, Watauga and Yancey counties as well as the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians. Interested farmers who live outside of this coverage area should contact RAFI-USA's Tobacco Communities Reinvestment Fund. See www.ncfarmgrants.org.

The administrator of WNC AgOptions is WNC Communities, a nonprofit organization that has been improving agriculture in the region since 1947. WNC Communities provides a unique forum for leaders in western North Carolina to carry out innovative programs to improve the quality of life for rural communities and to enhance the agriculture economy.

"WNC Communities is delighted to serve as administrator for WNC AgOptions," said L.T. Ward, Vice President of WNC Communities. "We are grateful to N.C. Tobacco Trust Fund Commission and North Carolina legislators for their support throughout the past ten years. This important and effective program has demonstrated tremendously favorable results in providing financial support to fledgling farmers that often makes the difference in their success."

Members of the WNC AgOptions steering committee include: representatives from N.C. Cooperative Extension, N.C. Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services—Marketing Division, WNC Communities, Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project and other leaders in agribusiness. For more information, see the following: WNC Agricultural Options: www.wncagoptions.org; N.C. Cooperative Extension Centers: www.ces.ncsu.edu; N.C. Tobacco Trust Fund Commission: www.tobaccotrustfund.org; WNC Communities: www.wnccommunities.org.

Peak-Season Soil-Testing Fee Beginning in December 2013

The 2013 Appropriations Act passed by the General Assembly approved a \$4 fee for soil samples analyzed by the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services for the period from **December through March**. The fee is an attempt to lessen the backlog associated with the busy season when the lab is routinely inundated with tens of thousands of samples. The rest of the year — April through November — NCDA&CS will continue to analyze soil samples without a fee.

In fiscal year 2013, nearly 368,000 soil samples were analyzed. About 60 percent of these arrived at the lab during the peak season of December through March, slowing processing turnaround time to nine weeks at one point. At other times of the year, processing can easily be completed in two to four weeks, depending on sample volume.

The new peak-season fee should accomplish two goals. First of all, it will encourage more growers to submit samples earlier, thereby fostering a more balanced sample load throughout the year. Secondly, the fee will enhance sustainability of the soil-testing program because receipts generated in fiscal years 2014 and 2015 are earmarked for improvements such as automated equipment, additional peak-season personnel and computer-programming enhancements.

The vast majority of soil samples analyzed during the winter months are from farms in preparation for spring planting. Most of these samples can be collected and submitted well before December 1st, thus avoiding the fee. Nearly all soil samples associated with home and garden and landscaping projects can be collected and submitted from April through November.

Soil samples received during the peak season will be processed in the order received without any guarantees regarding turnaround time. However, clients can purchase NCDA&CS expedited shippers to receive a guaranteed turnaround time of 10 business days. This year, 525 shippers will be sold. The anticipated 2013-14 price for a 36-sample shipper is \$200.

By late fall 2013, clients will have the convenience of entering sample and payment (credit card) information online via the PALS website. Cash and checks will be accepted for peak-season samples only if deposited in advance in an escrow account. Payment should never be placed inside shippers.

This year, December 1st falls on a Sunday and is preceded by the Thanksgiving holidays. Wednesday, November 27th, will be the last business day of the month for the soil-testing lab. **Any soil samples arriving after 6 p.m. on November 27 will be subject to the peak-season fee because they will not be logged in and processed until December 2.**

Contact the NCDA&CS Agronomic Division office at 919-733-2655 if you have any questions regarding the new peak-season soil-testing fee or the purchase of expedited shippers.

Bull Breeding Soundness Exams

The Western North Carolina Regional Livestock Center, in combination with North Carolina Cooperative Extension and North Carolina State University College of Veterinary Medicine, will be conducting **Bull Breeding Soundness Exams at the Western North Carolina Regional Livestock Center on Saturday, November 9, from 8:00 am until 2:00 pm.**

Anyone interested in having their bulls tested in preparation for the breeding season, **please contact Buncombe County Cooperative Extension to reserve your spot.** There will be a fee of \$50 per bull. Dr. Mark Alley, DVM, NC State University College of Veterinary Medicine, will be performing exams. Bulls will be vaccinated and dewormed courtesy of Zoetis Animal Health.

For additional information and to schedule your bulls, please contact Buncombe County Cooperative Extension at (828) 255-5522.

“BSE”

Mark L. Alley, DVM, MBA, Department of Population Health and Pathobiology
North Carolina State University College of Veterinary Medicine

Do you have BSE on your farm? As everyone reads the title, I expect many of you are expecting this article to be about bovine spongiform encephalopathy or more commonly referred to as “Mad Cow Disease”. No, we don’t want bovine spongiform encephalopathy on your farm, but we do want you to have another form of BSE performed annually on your farm. The remainder of this article regarding “BSE” will refer to Breeding Soundness Exam of bulls. There are many factors involved in properly performing a breeding soundness exam for your bulls and many common misconceptions about breeding soundness exams.

Why do a breeding soundness exam? In most situations bull breeding soundness exams are done for one of three reasons: to insure newly purchased bull is good, to insure the bull is ready for the breeding season, or to determine why the breeding season was not very good. All situations are important. Unfortunately, I probably perform as many BSE’s on bulls after a failed breeding season as I do in preparation for the breeding season or following purchase of new animal. When performing these BSEs “after the fact”, the owner is usually pretty accurate in describing the problem, and there is no way to recapture the lost breeding/calving season as a result of a bull failure. In several of these circumstances, a breeding soundness exam prior to the breeding season or at time of purchase may have prevented a lost or decreased calf crop. The best time to perform a breeding soundness exam is on the day that bull is turned into the pasture, because it gives you the best determination of the semen quality status of the bull. Unfortunately, this is not practical, because if the bull is deemed as unsatisfactory, you don’t have adequate time to find a replacement. Usually, I recommend testing the bulls 30 to 45 days prior to start of breeding season to give producers adequate time to find a replacement if necessary.

What is required to perform a breeding soundness exam (BSE)? Fortunately, the requirements for performing a breeding soundness exam are minimal. The two most important factors for completing a BSE are: competent veterinarian and good facilities.

- Facility requirements for completing a BSE are a good head gate or chute that allows bull to be easily restrained. The chute must have a method to allow the veterinarian to have access directly behind the bull and access to either left or right side of bull. Since bulls necks are usually larger than their head, it is imperative to have a bar that can be placed behind the bull to prevent it from slipping backwards from the head gate and crushing the veterinarian. As you can tell, I’m very much in favor of preserving veterinarians.

Additionally, it is important for there to be access to electricity, so the veterinarian can use a microscope to evaluate the semen sample shortly after collection as semen is very sensitive to changes in temperature.

Components of BSE

1. **Physical Exam:** It is highly unlikely the veterinarian will use a stethoscope to perform a complete physical exam; however, categories that we emphasize when looking at bull during breeding soundness exam include the following:
 - a. **Body Condition:** It desirable for bulls to be in body condition 6 to 7 out of 9 prior to the start of breeding season. Bulls that are less than 6 may not have enough energy reserves to make it through entire breeding season and as body condition becomes lower semen quality may diminish as well. Bulls greater than 7 are at higher risk of depositing fat around the base of scrotum which may impair the bull’s ability to regulate temperature of testes. Semen quality can be negatively impacted when temperatures are above 85°F for more than 4 weeks, and it may take 60 days before this semen quality returns to normal.
 - b. **Eyes:** Although bulls use their sense of smell to detect estrus in many circumstances, the eyes also play an important role. Many bulls (especially older bulls) may remain isolated from the cow herd until they see increased activity such as a cow riding another cow in estrus. The bull then rushes to the herd to determine if a cow/heifer is really in heat; therefore, vision is extremely important and may be more important in areas with larger pastures. Bulls with pinkeye scars or cancer eye should be evaluated carefully.

- c. **Feet and Legs:** Bulls must have no evidence of lameness (especially in back legs) prior to the start of breeding season. Careful attention should be paid to feet and leg conformation. Post-legged bulls will often have shortened life span due to arthritic changes that occur in these joints. If they do, it is unlikely they will be able to mount cows and successfully breed.
- d. **Teeth:** Bulls older than 8 years of age should have their teeth examined to determine if they can successfully graze and maintain body condition during breeding season. Bulls with short or missing teeth may be better culled.

2. Reproductive Exam:

- a. **Testes:** The veterinarian will palpate the testicles for any evidence of abnormalities such as evidence of degeneration (smaller testicles) or enlargement relative to the other testicle. Additionally, the circumference of the testicle will be measured. Scrotal circumference is important because the larger testicles have increased sperm making capacity which usually indicates higher fertility. Additionally, heifers sired from bulls with larger testicles usually reach puberty earlier. The table listed below indicates minimum requirements based on age of bull.

Minimal Recommended Scrotal Circumference	
Age	SC (cm)
<15 mos	30
15-18 mos	31
18-21 mos	32
21-24 mos	33
>24 mos	34

- b. **Prepuce and Penis:** The veterinarian will palpate and exam the prepuce and penis for any abnormalities. Some of the more common issues include: persistent frenulum in younger bulls that prevents extension of penis for breeding, penile papilloma (warts), hair rings, abscesses, etc. The presence of any of these abnormalities will prevent the bull from being deemed satisfactory potential breeder; however, many can be treated and rechecked in 6 to 8 weeks.
- c. **Internal Sex Organs:** Next the vet will perform a rectal exam to palpate the accessory sex glands (prostate, seminal vesicles, and ampullae). The most common abnormality is described as vesiculitis or inflammation of the seminal vesicles. Treatment usually involves antibiotics and anti-inflammatory drugs; however, success rate of treatment is quite variable depending on the cause and length of time that problem has existed.
3. **Semen Evaluation:** To collect a good semen sample most veterinarians use an electroejaculation system. It is comprised of a probe that is placed in the rectum of bull and a control box. Some systems have an automatic control while others work manually. This equipment provides small pulses of electrical stimulation in increasing intensity and frequency until penile extension and ejaculation occurs. Some bulls will vocalize and thrash in the chute.

Recent research by Palmer in 2005 set out to determine if there is currently a better alternative for collecting these bulls from a welfare perspective. Unfortunately to date, techniques that involve artificial vagina, manual palpation, and drugs are not as consistent in successfully getting the sample required. Most of his work determined that the level of pain is most often influenced by operator technique, and the goal should be to provide stimulation as gently as possible.

After examining the penis and collecting the semen sample, the sample will be evaluated with the use of microscope for motility (swimmers) and morphology (shape of cells). Minimum levels stated by Society for Theriogenology include >30 % normal progressive motility and >70% normal morphology. The usual technique is to examine semen for motility and then apply some stain to kill the spermatozoan to evaluate normal from abnormal cells. I usually count 100 random cells and this allows me to get a percentage normal vs. abnormal.

What a BSE is NOT?

- Does **NOT** guarantee that bull is free of disease (including sexually transmitted diseases) such as bovine viral diarrhea (BVD), trichomoniasis, vibriosis, etc unless specifically stated on the paper.
- Does **NOT** test for a bull's libido (or desire). Even if everything is functioning correctly, he could have limited desire. Another scenario that we commonly see is a young bull passes BSE, and he is placed in pasture with more dominant (older/larger) bull that passed a BSE a couple years ago. The more dominant bull has become infertile, but he won't allow the younger bull to breed cows. The end result is a failed calving season.
- Does **NOT** guarantee that bull is good for life. In my experience about 10 to 20% of bulls do not pass. Generally we see most failures in bulls less than 24 months of age and another subset of failure around 8 to 10 years of age.
- Does **NOT** guarantee that one bull deemed satisfactory is better than another bull deemed as satisfactory even though one bull may have more normal cells or better motility of the semen.
- Does **NOT** guarantee that a bull that is deemed unsatisfactory will never get a cow pregnant. Depending on the issue identified during the exam, a bull may still have some motile normal sperm. We all know that it only takes one sperm cell to meet the ovum to create a pregnancy; however these bulls will usually underperform if the goal is to get a high percentage of cows pregnant in a short period of time. Research indicates that a bull that is deemed as satisfactory will conservatively increase calf crop by 6%.

What is economic value of breeding soundness exam? According to Chenoweth in 2005, the value of a breeding soundness exam returns approximately \$13 to \$25 per \$1 invested in a bull breeding soundness exam. With the rate of bull breeding soundness exams ranging from \$35 to \$100, who can afford to not get their bulls tested? Please visit your local banker to see if they are interested in getting a 13-to-1 return on their investment. I look forward to hearing the remarks from the banker. It will most likely involve something about the legality of the investment.



Martin's Abattoir & Wholesale Meats, Inc. Suspends Production at Sampson County Plant

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jeffrey Martin

Phone: 910-567-6102

GODWIN, N.C. (Sept. 16, 2013) - The Martin family is saddened to announce they have suspended production of their Sampson County, NC beef processing plant, Martin's Abattoir & Wholesale Meats, Inc., effective immediately. In operation since 1955, the family owned and operated facility serves as one of only seven major cattle processing facilities east of the Mississippi River. The current economic climate of their industry has become increasingly difficult in the last eight months which has led to this decision. The Martins will decide in the next 60 days whether to reopen the plant in some capacity.

The Martins are suspending their beef operations just as they started them: on their own terms, quietly, with dignity. No cries for government bailouts. No complaints. The family will look back at 58 years of employing many Southeastern North Carolinians fondly. Several employees have worked for the company in excess of 40 years. Many have worked there for more than 30 years.

The Martins still have other companies in operation and they will continue to operate, but the beef plant was their oldest. Carlton Martin has been there since the beginning. He started the plant with his father, W. C. (Cap) Martin, Sr. In the years since, Carlton's brother, W. C. Martin, Jr., joined the team as an owner. Now more than ten family members work for the company—from W. A. Bullard (the general manager and nephew of the Martin brothers) to second and third generation family members.

Ask anyone that raises cattle here in North Carolina or in the southeast and Midwest United states. Odds are they have done business with the Martins. And for the last 58 years, the Martins have paid for the cattle they buy no later than the next business day, even when they buy them in states as far away as Texas and Missouri.

Never seeking attention or notoriety, the Martins have gone about their daily lives without any fanfare, accomplishing their tasks quietly and without notice. They hope that will continue during this suspension of production. They will work diligently during the next 60 days to make the best decision about the plant's future and will let their employees and customers know as soon as they make that determination.

All employees will be paid for the next 60 days, and all company benefits are still in place during this time. The company employees about 175 people.

About the company

Martin's Abattoir & Wholesale Meats, Inc. has been a constant and consistent partner of the U.S. cattle industry since 1955. The company would like to thank its employees and customers for the many wonderful years they have worked together.

2013 Coming Events

Oct 22	Navigating the WNC AgOptions Grant , 6:00 pm, Buncombe County Cooperative Extension Center
Oct 23	Navigating the WNC AgOptions Grant , 9:00 am, Buncombe County Cooperative Extension Center
Oct 24	WNC Beef Commission Supper , WNC Regional Livestock Center - BUY TICKETS IN ADVANCE
Oct 25	Polk County 4-H BBQ , 4:30-7:00 pm, Polk County 4-H Center - BUY TICKETS IN ADVANCE
Nov 1	AgOptions Grant Intent to Apply Deadline
Nov 9	Breeding Soundness Exams , 8:00 am - 2:00 pm, WNC Regional Livestock Center
Nov 19	Buncombe County Friends of Ag Breakfast , 7:00 am, Virginia Boone Building, WNC Agricultural Center
Dec 9 & 10	Carolina Meat Conference , Benton Convention Center, Winston-Salem, NC
Dec 13	WNC AgOptions Grant Applications Due

NC Choices Presents the 3rd Annual Carolina Meat Conference

NC Choices' Carolina Meat Conference enters its third year of innovative educational programming and unparalleled networking opportunities for niche meat supply chain partners including farmers, processors, chefs, buyers and industry support businesses. The Carolina Meat Conference is a gathering of professionals from all sectors of the local and niche meat industry for two days of panel discussions, presentations, workshops, live butchery and animal handling demonstrations, a trade show, great meals featuring local meats and Monday night social, dinner and keynote address.

Conference topics include livestock production, meat processing, innovative marketing techniques and the latest updates on how new regulations will affect small food businesses.

This year the conference will be held on December 9 and 10 at the Benton Convention Center in Winston Salem, NC. For more information on registration and event details please see the website <http://www.carolinameatconference.com>

More information on registration and event details will be available soon at: www.carolinameatconference.com
For Sponsorship and Exhibitor information, please contact Meredith@ncchoices.com



Did you know that you can receive 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.
