

OBJECTIVE A-2 – CONTROVERSIAL LIVESTOCK ISSUES

Citizens (farm and non-farm) will respond to issues of mutual concern that relate to production agriculture, including human nutrition, nuisance identification, food quality assurance, quality of life, economic impacts, disaster preparedness, the appropriate treatment of farm animals and environmental stewardship.

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PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Contention between the benefits of animal production and problems as viewed by various communities is a delicate balance and is ever shifting. Livestock production in Robeson County requires tremendous capital investments resulting in sizable property taxes for the county. Producers generate additional profits; jobs are created; additional business is created for suppliers of building materials, other products, and services; and the waste from the animals provides a valuable alternative to commercial fertilizers. However, animal activists, neighbors next to litter application fields, neighbors next to confinement animal operations, and those encountering trucks hauling live animals or animal feeds on public highways often object to situations they encounter.

Extension's primary focus is to provide accurate and timely information to those affected and to local decision makers, and to propose possible alternatives to alleviate and/or mitigate confrontation. This involves being recognized and accepted as an unbiased educational resource of the university.

SITUATION STATEMENT

Existing confinement animal operations as well as some poultry house expansion throughout Robeson County creates conflicts with rural, non-farm residents. Increasingly, rather than the actual farm site generating complaints, neighbor are concerned when animal waste is spread on fields throughout communities.

Implications for the future are guidelines, recommendations, and further regulations for how, where and when litter can be land applied (e.g., surface application vs. incorporation).

The use of antibiotics and other medications has negative impacts on the global trading of animal products and creates concerns from domestic consumers as well. Alternatives can prove costly to companies and contracting farmers in terms of production efficiency, animal health, and growth. Restrictions on exports of animal products can severely affect the economy in Robeson County because there are five (5) animal procession facilities either in or near the county, and many of the county's residents work in these facilities. In addition, local animal producers rely on these facilities as a market for their animals.

Stocking densities in confinement animal operations as well as the treatment of other farm animals can create concerns from animal rights/welfare groups. These concerns can result in increased government regulations requiring additional expenses for contracting companies, contract growers, and animal farmers in general. Concern for prevention and quick response to poultry and animal disease threats may seem intrusive to small backyard poultry flock owners and to part-time or limited resource animal producers.

Biosecurity and agriterrorism are becoming major issues for animal producers, contracting companies, and the general public. Extension can play a major role in leading the effort to educate all those concerned about basic security measures and the strategies needed to ensure a safe food supply.

Increasingly, food safety and quality assurance is making its way to the farm which will create more diligence and additional practices on the part of contracting growers to ensure meat safety and quality. In many cases there is a need to educate consumers about food safety and food buying strategies.

TARGET AUDIENCES

- Employees of commercial animal and poultry production companies
- Commercial contract animal and poultry growers
- Litter clean-out companies
- Non-poultry farmers utilizing poultry litter waste
- Rural non-farm residents
- Consumers
- Government agencies: NRCS/SWCD; DENR/DWQ; NCDA&CS, DOT
- Robeson County Health Department
- Private companies: feed stores, lenders, and equipment suppliers
- Agricultural organizations: Farm Bureau, Livestock Association
- Civic Clubs
- Small backyard flock owners, including Mexican immigrants
- Government leaders and elected officials

TEACHING POINTS

- Compliance with regulations
- Alternatives to land application of litter
- Critical and proper information acquisition for decision making
- Information technology use
- Understanding modern animal production practices
- Costs and benefits associated with alternative production practices

PROGRAM DELIVERY STRATEGIES

- One-on-one contact
- Group meetings
- Tours
- Field days
- Research trial results and demonstrations
- Mass media
- Direct mailings and targeted email
- Extension publications and bulletins
- Videos
- Internet and Homepages
- E-mail
- Public hearings.

EVALUATION STRATEGIES

- Existing records
- NCDA testing services results
- NRCS cost share results
- Document number of complaints

Observation of changes made and recommendations implemented
Feedback from various Specialized Advisory Committees
Feedback from Extension staff
Feedback from contracting companies and agribusinesses
Feedback from farmer
Feedback from citizens
Surveys
Pre and Post program testing
Needs assessment meetings

PROGRAMMING RESOURCES

Extension Specialists
Extension publications and bulletins
North Carolina Agricultural Chemicals Manual
Government agencies: NRCS/SWCD; DENR/DWQ; NCDA&CS
Robeson County Health Department
Commercial poultry production companies
Commercial contract animal growers
Litter clean-out companies
Other private companies: feed stores, lenders, and agribusinesses
Agricultural organizations: Farm Bureau, Livestock Association
Civic Clubs
Grant opportunities
Intranet and Internet