

**CASWELL AMAZING GRAZING/AGRICULTURE
EXTENSION NOTES
Fall 2012**

Hello again,

It's been a while since I sent out the last newsletter from my desk. As I sit here and think of the need for more rainfall that we are finally getting and the first frost coming in October; we have had a fairly good grower season this year here in Caswell County for most crops, except for earlier corn plantings. Everyone is harvesting tobacco, planting cool-season grasses and legumes, and getting ready for October/November planting of small grains. Ah, my favorite time of year – fall is in the air, but we still have gorgeous summer tomatoes, zucchini, peppers and more overflowing tables at the Farmers' Markets in surrounding counties. And, no matter how long it's been since I've been in school, my thoughts always turn to new learning and adventures at this time of the year. We will definitely answer your needs if you contact us. Feel free to continue contacting our office for research-based information. Now, I've got some latest information and opportunities that I hope will help all of you in your farming enterprise.

NC Cattle Industry Assessment Referendum—October 4th, 2012

The North Carolina Cattlemen's Association (NCCA) has announced that the N. C. Cattle Industry Assessment Referendum vote will take place on October 4, 2012. The North Carolina Cattlemen's Association requested permission from the N. C. Board of Agriculture to conduct a referendum to continue the N. C. Cattle Industry Assessment. Permission was granted by the Board of Agriculture and arrangements have been made with the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service to facilitate the voting. The Caswell County Extension Office will be the polling place for our county on October 4, 2012 from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

The referendum will be to assess all cattle sold and marketed in North Carolina one dollar per head for the purposes of advancing the cattle industry in the state. The money collected will be used to fund the following five areas: youth programs, cattle research, education, promotion of North Carolina cattle and beef, and issues management. The North Carolina dairy industry will also benefit from the funds collected, as a portion of the income will be allocated to the same areas within the dairy sector.

The N. C. Cattle Industry Assessment Referendum would allow producers to continue to provide funds that would be controlled totally by the North Carolina beef and dairy producers to promote our product, our youth, our industry, and to provide research and advocacy to protect their way of life." Since the assessment was reinstated on January 1, 2010, research and education projects have been funded to deal with production issues facing North Carolina cattlemen in the areas of management, forage production, feed efficiency, and general input reductions.

In addition, we have been able to provide additional services in issues management to help the public have a better understanding of our industry and training for farmers to help them reduce stress on both them and the cattle in their care. Youth programs have been a huge beneficiary of the investments from the assessment as we were able to support livestock schools, judging contests, Skillathon contests, leadership development, and the very popular Youth Beef Industry Tour, among many others.

The assessment will be for a period of six years with a recurring referendum if requested. Producers will be eligible for a full refund of their North Carolina assessment by request within 60 days of the sale of the animal with proof of sale. This is a provision that is not available in the national program due to federal law.

All cattle owners who are at least 18 years of age as of October 4, 2012, will be eligible to vote. Voting will take place at the Caswell County Cooperative Extension office. All eligible voters must vote in their county. Absentee ballots may be obtained by contacting our office.

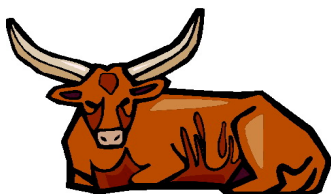
Upcoming Caswell County Forestry Association Area Forestry Field Day and Tour--- September 29th



The North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service—Caswell County Center, in conjunction with the North Carolina Tree Farm Program, the North Carolina Forest Service, and the USDA Conservation Service will sponsor the Third Annual Forestry Day and Tour on Saturday, September 29, 2012.

The day will begin at the Caswell County Civic Center, 536 Main Street East, in Yanceyville at 9:00 a.m. Informative programs on government cost-share programs and wildlife deer management will be presented. A free hot dog and hamburger lunch will follow at noon sponsored by several forestry companies.

The day's activities will follow with an afternoon forestry tour on the Tom Vandegutch Farm located on the Worsham Road in the Ruffin Community from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. A head count will be needed for lunch. Please call the Caswell County Extension Office at 336-694-4158 by 9:00 a.m. on Friday, September 28, 2012 to help us better prepare for the lunch meal.



Upcoming Piedmont North Carolina Bull Breeding Soundness Evaluation Clinic

Most cattle producers have questioned whether or not their bulls were breeding all of their cows or heifers. About 20 percent of bulls examined will not be satisfactory breeders. Therefore, the Caswell County Extension Center in conjunction with Caswell County Cattlemen's Association will be conducting the breeding soundness evaluation (BSE) clinic on bulls on Wednesday, October 17, 2012 starting at 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon on the Lawrence Bernard Farm located on the Mountain Hill Road off of Highway 57/62 North of Milton. Dr. Pete Fulper will be the veterinarian performing the BSE clinic. Breeding soundness evaluation (BSE) is a method, which has been developed to assess, breeding potential of bulls for natural mating. A complete BSE consists of (1) physical examination, (2) measurement of scrotal size, and (3) semen evaluation for sperm motility (movement) and abnormal morphology (structure and shape).

A complete BSE for a bull will only cost approximately \$50.00 verses paying \$155.00 for a vet to come to your place and complete a BSE on your bull. Bulls should have not been breeding cattle for at least 30 days prior to a BSE test. Also, bulls need to be held in good trailers before unloading. After the bulls are tested we will load them directly back into their trailers.

If you plan on bringing bull(s), we would appreciate it if you would call me at 336-694-4158 to let me know how many bulls and the approximate time of arrival. This way we can better schedule the testing.

If you have any questions, feel free to call me. Just remember, one bad bull or poor breeder will lose you more than \$50.00 in one calving season. Let's have another successful BSE clinic for the ninth year in a row here in Caswell County.



Upcoming Cattlemen's Association Meeting

The North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service, Caswell County Center, in conjunction with the Caswell County Cattlemen's Association will conduct an educational meeting on Tuesday, October 9, 2012 at the Agriculture Building in the Extension Kitchen at 6:30 p.m.

Dr. Mark Alley, NCSU Extension Veterinarian, will be the keynote speaker with a discussion on "Beef Cattle Weaning Management." We will also discuss association business and the upcoming NCSU Bull Sales.

This is the fifth sponsored Cattlemen's Meeting for the year. We will be serving steaks that night; therefore, you will need to call our office at 336-694-4158 by 5:00 p.m. on Monday, October 8, 2012 so Keith Vernon, Lawrence Bernard, Wayne Hodges and the rest of the cooking crew, along with myself, can better prepare for the meal.

Upcoming GAP (Good Agricultural Practices) Training

The North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service, Caswell County Center, will conduct GAP Training to all interested folks in selling produce and meats direct marketing to restaurants, stores, and farmers markets. The training will start at 8:30 a.m. on Wednesday, October 10, 2012 with a sponsored luncheon and conclude around 2:30 p.m. Upon completion of the training participants will receive a certificate that hopefully will help them better market their products. Call our office for details and to register at 336-694-4158.

Stockpiling Tall Fescue For Winter Grazing

One of the greatest expenses for beef and sheep producers is winter feed costs. Brood animal profitability is dependent on low feed costs. One way to lower these costs, especially with the \$9.00/bushel for corn and \$17/bushel for soybeans, is to field stockpile forages for fall and winter grazing. Tall fescue is the most desirable grass to stockpile for late fall and winter grazing. During the fall, this grass produces higher yields of stockpiled forage of superior quality compared to most other temperate grasses. The fall-saved forage is very palatable and high in digestibility (high in soluble sugars). Forage quality losses from leaf deterioration after frost is lower for tall fescue compared to most other forages. In Caswell County, tall fescue will stay green and may even grow a little during warm winter days. Tall fescue forms a strong sod that is tolerant of trampling damage, which is common on wet pasture soils during the winter. Winter grazing has minimal influence on yield or quality of this grass the following season. It's not too late to spread fertilizers to fescue pastures. Add approximately 50-60 units of nitrogen per acre now since it just rained, so you can start grazing in late December or early January.



Acorn Poisoning

There is always a risk of acorn poisoning in the fall of the year where oak trees are in pastures. I have already had a couple of calls concerning acorn poisoning this fall. This condition is somewhat of a paradox because we know acorns are an important source of feed for wildlife, and cattle will readily eat them. They generally cause few problems, and cattle will always eat most of the acorns available in pastures. If they consume too many, too fast, the tannins they contain can be metabolized in the rumen into a substance that is a kidney toxin. The toxin is thought to be gallotannin or a metabolite of that compound. The condition is not totally understood, but in affected animals kidney function is compromised (because of tubular necrosis) and cattle go off feed and rapidly lose weight. Sometimes they will recover, but often the condition is fatal. Most poisoning cases here appear to be due to white oak and chestnut oak acorns. The only treatment is to remove them from the source of acorns and feed a very low protein diet. Acorn poisoning seems to be more of a problem with larger calves that have been on limited grass and are then moved into a pasture with many acorns on the ground resulting in a rapid intake. Nursing calves can also be affected because the toxic

principles can be transferred to the milk. Acorns can also cause agalactia (no or little milk) in fall calving cows. Affected cattle will first show signs of constipation, followed by an abnormal (dark or yellowish) colored thick diarrhea, sometimes with blood. A common practice to prevent the condition is feeding a 10% calcium hydroxide (slaked lime or hydrated lime), 90% grain supplement fed at 4 lb/day for mature cows and 2 lb/day for weaned calves. This preventative was developed to prevent oak sprout poisoning, but appears to also help in preventing acorn poisoning.

Potential For Prussic Acid Poisoning

Every year at first frost we get a lot of questions about grazing frost bitten sorghum-sudan. Anytime you have frost on sorghum or sorghum x sudan crop there is potential for prussic acid poisoning. Prussic acid, also known as hydrocyanic acid, is a problem in wilted wild cherry leaves and occasionally wilted leaves from other fruit species. The other major plants with potential for this problem are members of the sorghum family including Johnsongrass, shatter cane, grain or forage sorghum, and sorghum x sudan hybrids (aka sudex or sudax). There are several other grasses that may be a problem including sudangrass, but most don't grow in our area. Any of the sorghum species can be toxic very early in their growth (maybe up to knee high), and then when there are new sprouts that grow following a drought or frost. Johnsongrass is the most problematic plant, and to be totally safe you should wait until it is waist high and starting to head to graze the early growth, or when it is frosted on wait two weeks after the killing freeze. When Johnsongrass is in pastures as a spotty weed, it does not pose as great a risk as long as there is little enough to where cattle can't eat it as a high proportion of their diet. Right now, the best advice we can give is that there will be a risk in grazing it from now until about 2 weeks after the killing freeze. If a producer chooses to harvest forages that have been frosted on it is best to make dry hay from it. The prussic acid will dissipate from the hay. In silage, some of the prussic acid will be retained, but some of it will dissipate during removal and handling of the silage, although it probably will be retained in the balage to a higher extent than chopped silage. If a producer really wants to graze the crop and it has had just a touch of frost (or for future reference when summer growth resumes after drought) it is advisable to turn in a few low value animals (i.e. open cull cows) and see how they do. If they stay out for several days without any symptoms it is likely safe, but keep in mind that the problem can develop when there is a series of light frosts followed by regrowth. The symptoms of prussic acid poisoning are gasping, staggering, trembling muscles, convulsions, and death from respiratory failure. The mucus membranes will be blue in color. There is a treatment for the condition, Sodium Thiosulfate, but that can only be administered by a veterinarian and generally will not be in time to save the animals. Hungry cattle are more at risk. Never turn hungry cattle into a stand of forage with prussic acid potential. Interestingly we get a lot of calls this time of year, but the greatest problem is with wild cherry trees during the summer thunderstorm season, and very few producers seem concerned that those trees are in their pastures.

Fall Emergency Preparedness Update

September is National Preparedness Month, a time for all of us to re-familiarize ourselves with our emergency plans and touch base with our local colleagues who help us prepare for and respond to disasters. Extension has always responded to any challenges facing North Carolina citizens. Anything we can do to help them better prepare before a disaster strikes will minimize the impact of the disaster. I encourage you to visit both the FEMA (www.FEMA.gov) and EDEN (www.eden.lsu.edu) websites to see what special National Preparedness activities are planned for the month. Just recently, Caswell County Cooperative Extension and other county agencies updated the Caswell County Animal Response Disaster Plan.

Beware of Bitter Sneezeweed

Bitter sneezeweed (*Helenium ararum*) is an erect, annual weed, 10 inches in height with narrow leaves, alternating on the stem. The flowers are common in August and September and are located at the end of each stem. A member of the Sunflower family, our species of sneezeweed has showy yellow flowers in the late summer. In dry years, the lower leaves are lost but the new leaves continue up the stalk. In Caswell County we commonly see sneezeweed growing along rural roads across the county and some pastures.

The plant is toxic to grazing livestock but is rarely consumed in toxic amounts. The entire plant has a strong odor and is bitter to the taste. Cattle consume sneezeweed only if no other forage is available. Avoid cutting hay containing a large amount of bitter sneezeweed. Do not feed hay containing any of the plant to livestock. Sneezeweed ingestion causes severe irritation to the mucous membranes. Dullness, trembling and weakness are first observed. In many instances, vomiting is prominent. Severe infestations of sneezeweed in pastures should be controlled with broadleaf herbicides in late spring when good growing conditions exist. It would be best now just to clip them with the bush hog. For a color image of this weed go to the following website: <http://www.forestryimages.org/browse/detail.cfm?imgnum=1391480>

October Beef Cattle Management Calendar

Spring Calving Herds

- Work calves prior to weaning, administer pre-weaning vaccinations
- Wean calves this month or early next month
- Market calves to your best advantage
- Make arrangements for backgrounding calves
- Feed replacement heifers to gain 1.5 – 1.75 lbs per day or use the target weight method to calculate the rate of gain
- Pregnancy check cows

- Body condition score cows at weaning and separate thin cows
- Cull open, old and very thin cows; check feet and legs, udders and eyes
- Switch to high magnesium minerals to prevent grass tetany
- Finalize winter feeding strategies and inventory feed supplies, and secure feed for winter

Fall Calving Herds

- Continue calving
- Move pregnant heifers and early calving cows to calving area about 2 weeks before due date
- Check cows 3 to 4 times per day, heifers more often – assist early if needed
- Keep calving area clean and move healthy pairs out to large pastures 3 days after calving
- Body condition score cows at calving; plan nutrition/grazing program based on BCS
- Ear tag and dehorn all calves at birth; castrate male calves in commercial herds
- Give selenium plus vitamin E and vitamin A & D injections to newborn calves
- Feed cows extra energy after calving; protein supplementation may be needed if good pasture is not available. Cows calving at BCS < 5 should receive special nutritional attention.
- Keep high quality, high magnesium, high selenium minerals available
- Reproductive tract score and measure pelvic areas on yearling replacement heifers; RTS should be 3 or better and pelvic areas should be >150 sq. cm
- Plan estrous synchronization program; line-up AI technician and supplies

Sincerely,



Joey E. Knight, III
County Extension Director

Persons with disabilities and persons with limited English proficiency may request accommodations to participate by contacting Joey E. Knight, III, County Extension Director at 336-694-4158 (phone), or joey_knight@ncsu.edu (email) or 336-694-5930 (Fax), or in person at the Caswell County Extension office at least (5) days prior to the event. Employment and program opportunities are offered to all people regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability. North Carolina State University, North Carolina A&T State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture and local governments cooperating.