

## State Cattle Working Contest for Youth - *Teresa Herman, Livestock Agent, Iredell County*

Youth from several area high schools travelled to Laurel Springs Tuesday morning to compete in the third annual State Cattle Working Contest. Teams from the region were composed of Future Farmers of America (FFA), 4-Hers, and representatives from area cattlemen's associations. The competition consists of a written exam on Beef Quality Assurance (BQA), a nationally recognized program that promotes animal welfare, health and safety. Students that pass the exam will become BQA certified through the North Carolina Cattlemen's Association. The second part of the competition involves hands-on practical application of the BQA program. Students are required to give proper vaccinations that keep cattle healthy and free from diseases, similar to the vaccination program for humans. Students are judged on how accurately they read and record product labels, dosages, expiration dates, withdrawal times, etc. They are also judged on their ability to handle animals in a safe and humane fashion. Keeping animals safe, healthy and comfortable is the ultimate goal of the Beef Quality Assurance program. This competition is a method in which our youth can take a proactive approach to ensuring a healthy and safe beef product in the grocery store.



North Iredell FFA team #1 placed 1<sup>st</sup> overall out of 14 teams from around the region, including Alexander Central, Bandys, Lake Norman and Surry Central. These remarkable youth, excelled in their ability to safely and humanely administer vaccinations to beef heifers. This dedication and drive from our students is a direct reflection of the high quality instruction provided by the Iredell County High School Agriculture Departments. Food and fiber will always be important for our normal day-to-day lives. Take a minute to thank a farmer, as well as, those teachers that are teaching our Future Farmers of America.

## Weaning Tips - *John Cothren, Livestock Agent, Wilkes County*

For many cow/calf operations throughout the region, weaning of fall born calves is either upon us or soon to arrive. Working cattle and the weaning process can be stressful on producers, their families, and the cattle they tend to every day. With just a little management, much of that stress can be reduced, making things easier on you and your cattle and hopefully leave a little more money in your pocket. One of the major keys to success in weaning your calves is keeping the calves healthy.



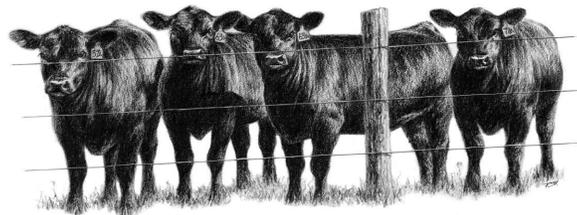
A major contributor to animal health at weaning is the level of stress the calves undergo through weaning. Much like people, an increased level of stress in livestock leads to fatigue and weakens the immune system. Here are a few tips to help reduce the stress level put on your calves during weaning:

1. Work cattle in a calm smooth manner. Try and avoid getting over excited with the animals as it can lead to fear in the herd and added problems down the road, increasing the likelihood of sick calves and added doctoring expenses.
2. Try using a fence line weaning approach where the calves are allowed to have contact with their mothers across the fence. Allowing them to remain in close proximity to one another tends to reduce the amount of bawling and gives them a sense of security. Within a few days, the calves will be accustomed to being separated from their mother and they can be separated. Although facility layout doesn't always allow for contact between the cow and calf, it is something to consider for the future.
3. Remove objects that may excite cattle by making loud or unusual sounds and out of place shadows, Things such as loose tin, broken feed troughs or hay rings and poor fencing are all common culprits leading to unusual noises or movements that can startle calves.
4. Allow free choice access to clean fresh water at all times. Place the water source along a fence line where it is easily found by incoming calves scoping out their new surroundings.
5. Allow free choice access to either grass or good quality grass hay.

Weaning is a good time to introduce calves to a grain supplement. Remember to start them off slow and gradually increase the amount of feed allowing the rumen to get acclimated to a new feed source. This will get them used to coming to the bunk as well as getting them more comfortable with having people in their surroundings.

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### Summer Annuals for Grazing - Allison Brown, Livestock Agent, Alexander County

Annual forages can offer great benefits to beef cattle operations. Both cool and warm season annual forages can fill in those gaps in your permanent grazing system. Warm season annuals particularly, will perform well in the summer months when fescue does not. Start with a small field that you can easily rotate your cattle on and off. Then consider planting a winter annual in the fall! This will not only increase your grazing days but also increase animal performance.



In North Carolina, cool-season grasses produce ample forage in the spring and fall, but high temperatures and short-term drought stress often limit growth during the summer months. Therefore, there is a need for additional grazing, hay or green-chop during July and August. Summer annual grasses can fill this gap with relatively high quality forage when properly managed. Advantages to using summer annual grasses include fast germination and emergence, rapid growth, high productivity, and flexibility of utilization. Warm-season grasses can be grazed as needed and excess growth can be harvested as hay or silage.

Summer annual grasses that can be grown in North Carolina include sudangrass (*Sorghum bicolor*), forage sorghum (*Sorghum bicolor*), sorghum x sudangrass hybrids, pearl millet (*Pennisetum americanum*), foxtail millet (*Setaria italica*), and crabgrass (*Digitaria* species). There are some new BMR (brown mid-rib) sorghum/sudan varieties available that offer high quality due to the reduced lignon in the plant. Lignon reduces the digestibility of the plant thereby reducing the nutritional value. Thus BMR forage has higher feed value and forage palatability for livestock offering higher daily gains on stockers in a Texas A&M study.

### Summer Annual Spotlight on Crabgrass

Crabgrass is generally thought of as a weed, but many cattlemen in the south are considering it a great choice for summer grazing. It is not as finicky to maintain and can often take more abuse from lack of grazing management than other summer annuals. Crabgrass can be double cropped behind ryegrass or small grain. Crabgrass needs sunlight to germinate so planting too deep will be a disaster. Often times broadcasting or using the small see box on a drill is the best option.

Commercially Available Cultivars: Red River, Quick-N-Big, MoJo (see your local seed dealer)

Planting: Late Spring or Early Summer (let the soil warm up) - May

Depth: Surface to ¼ inch

Rate: 3 to 5 lbs per acre

Fertilize: 50 to 100 lbs of Nitrogen after establishment –

You can apply additional nitrogen after grazing and moisture is available to maximize forage.

