

LIVESTOCK & FORAGE NEWS

FALL 2007

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BEEF PRODUCERS MEETING

There will be a Beef Producers Meeting for Davie & Yadkin Counties, Thursday, September 27, 2007. The meeting will be held at Deep Creek Farms and Grain, beginning at 6:30 PM. The topic of discussion will be centered around overcoming the effects of the drought. The heat, lack of quality feed and other stresses have compromised cattle immunities. We will discuss deworming and vaccination strategies to help cattle through these stressful times. A program on alternate/supplement nutrition will also be presented. Herd health and proper nutrition are areas that should not be scrimped on but becoming more efficient is necessary to increase production while holding costs as low as possible, to help survive this drought.

There will be a sponsored supper and RESERVATIONS ARE NEEDED!!! Please call the Extension Office (753-6100 Davie, 679-2061 Yadkin) BEFORE Tuesday, September 25, to make reservations or for more information.

EQUINE COURSES TO BE OFFERED

The 2007-2008 Equine Short Course & Clinic Series is accepting registrations. This annual event is a series of educational programs designed to provide the most recent information and technology concerning horses.

Some of the topics to be covered are: Horse Breeding, Hoof Care & Shoeing, Judging, Judges' Certification Training, Ring Steward, Forage Management, Feeding Management, Foaling and Foal Management. The classes start in October 2007 and run into May 2008. Most of the classes are held in the Raleigh area. There is a registration fee to attend and you will be responsible for most of your meals, travel and lodging expenses.

For more information or a registration form, come by or call the Extension Center or contact the Extension Horse Husbandry Dept. (919-515-5784) or www.cals.ncsu.edu/an_sci/extension/horse/hhmain.html.

NEED PESTICIDE CREDITS?

If you need some pesticide credits to meet the requirements, make plans to attend one of these events.

September 25 in Statesville (704-873-0507):	1:00 PM	X Training	7:00 PM	V Training
September 26 in Mocksville (336/753-6100)	9:00 AM	V Training	1:00 PM	X Training

Call the site you wish to attend so adequate preparations can be made.

BETTER THAN SNAIL MAIL

With drought information coming in bunches or over the course of several days, trying to send you information by mail is not always the best option. If you have an email address, or access to one, let me know as I have plans to try and distribute information by email to reduce the time frame. If you are interested, send me those email addresses.

BEEF BAR-B-QUE TO SUPPORT YOUTH

A Beef Bar-B-Que will be held with all proceeds going to help support local youth with 4-H Livestock projects. The Bar-B-Que will be Saturday, November 17 at Wm. R. Davie Fire Dept., just north of Mocksville. Meals are take out only and they will begin serving at 4:00 PM and go until 7:00 PM. You can get a full plate with beef, slaw, beans, rolls and a desert, or if you just want some Bar-B-Que for later, they will also sell it by the bag. All proceeds go to support local youth educational livestock projects ranging from judging, skillathon, and clinics to actual livestock projects.

The Bar-B-Que is sponsored by the Yadkin-Davie 4-H Livestock Assoc. For more information or to purchase tickets, contact the Extension Center. Even if you don't purchase a ticket, walk-ins are welcome. Come out November 17, get a great deal on a great meal and help our local youth to have a brighter future.

DROUGHT MANAGEMENT TIPS

1. Cull non-essential animals. Don't waste expensive feed on non-productive animals.
2. Don't base recovery on possible government relief programs or a hay lift. Have other options in place as recovery programs might not happen, be too late or not enough.
3. AVOID OVERGRAZING pastures. This reduces the stand vigor, increases weed growth and decreases the forage stand next season no matter how much rain we get.
4. Check feed supplies for ALL species of livestock. Don't wait until there is a foot of snow on the ground to decide you need to purchase hay.
5. Beef producers need to keep their eye on cheap sources of feed that might become available (whole cottonseed, corn gluten, brewers grain, ensiled broiler litter and others).
6. Perform Forage Analysis of hay if not already completed. Only costs \$10 but gives you
7. Look at alternative feeds: baled corn stalks, soybean hay, protein supplements.
8. Make plans to overseed pastures/hay land when adequate moisture comes. Don't forget to fertilize.
9. Forage stands are stressed and even with adequate rainfall, the stand next season will be reduced. To keep from causing more damage next year—adjust stocking rate to allow more acres per cow/calf pair and overseed to in-crease stand vigor.
10. Be careful when feeding drought stressed forages. Forages such as millet, sorghum/sudangrass, johnsongrass, corn stalks and some weeds can accumulate nitrates. NCDA forage lab will test for nitrates and the test is free. Contact me.
11. Provide adequate shade, water, nutrition and care for your animals during this stressful time.

These are just a few tips. Each operation has their own needs and situations. I do not have all the answers, the silver bullet or magic wand to answer all of your questions or make this situation go away. I do have resources and options that might help you through this trying time. Please contact me and I'll try to provide you with information to help you with the difficult decisions that must be made.

NC CATTLE INDUSTRY ASSESSMENT REFERENDUM

The NC Cattlemen's Assoc. has announced that the NC Cattle Industry Assessment Referendum vote will take place on November 14, 2007. Cooperative Extension Centers in each county will serve as the polling place. If passed, the referendum will assess ALL CATTLE one dollar (\$1.00) per head for the purposes of promoting the cattle industry in North Carolina. The funds will be used for producer education regarding beef production topics, beef production research, youth education and leadership development, promotion and marketing of NC cattle and other areas that the current beef check off funds can not be used. The NC Dairy Industry will benefit from this program, as dairy cattle will also be assessed at the same level. This is a state level assessment only, and is in addition to the Beef Check Off. A refund provision will be available, for the state wide assessment, for producers who wish to pursue a refund.

All North Carolina cattle owners over the age of 18, as of November 14, 2007, are eligible to vote during regular business hours at the local County Extension Center. For more details, contact the NC Cattlemen's Assoc. or the Cooperative Extension Center.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

September 25	Deadline to make reservations for the Beef Producers Meeting
September 25	Pesticide Trainings in Statesville
September 26	Pesticide Training in Mocksville
September 27	Joint County Beef Producer Meeting, 6:30 PM, Deep Creek Farms
November 14	Cattle Referendum vote
November 17	Yadkin-Davie 4-H Livestock Assoc. Beef Bar-B-Q, Wm R. Davie VFD 4-7 PM

This just came in from specialists in the Crops and Animals Science Departments. This could be an option for some local producers. Please contact me if you need more information or if I can be of further assistance.

September 11, 2007

Soybeans as forage for grazing, hay or silage

Last week, Jim Dunphy, NCSU Soybean Specialist, wrote "Have we run out of time to make a grain crop from our drought-stressed soybeans? In many parts of the state, probably yes. I don't expect soybeans to develop a flower into a physiologically mature seed in less than 45 days, and parts of the state are already within 45 days of the average first killing frost. Much of the state which is not there yet will be soon."

With the continuation of the drought, it seems less and less likely that soybeans will make a profitable bean crop, but they may have some value as a forage crop. Soybean forage can definitely help North Carolina producers who are short on feed because of the drought. In the current drought conditions this is a draft summary of information on salvaging soybeans for forage use.

If producers have soybean herbage, making hay or silage for their own stock or for sale is an economic calculation. Remember, a field should have enough forage to pay for the fuel to harvest it. An acre of soybeans may yield 3-4 round bales at best. A maximum of 2 tons dry matter (DM) per acre is possible, but much less is likely.

Two cautions before salvaging soybeans as forage:

1. Insecticides and herbicides used on the beans must be within the labeled use for livestock forage. Contact your local Extension Agent for complete information.
2. Contact a crop insurance agent before harvesting for forage. They will advise each producer on how harvesting a crop for forage may affect insurance payments. The status of the crop may need to be documented for possible disaster payments before haying or grazing.

Grazing

Grazing is the most efficient means of harvesting the forage. Strip grazing soybeans will result in less waste due to trampling, fouling with manure etc. Grazing is the best option, especially if the beans made very little growth. But the field must be fenced, and water needs to be provided to the animals. *If there are still animals grazing perennial pastures, use the beans (or corn) to get the animals off the permanent pastures. This may allow pastures to survive the drought. At this point in the season and the drought, pastures need to put all their energy into recovery and survival. **Feed alternatives now and let pastures recover for next season.***

Soybean silage

In Kentucky, Wisconsin, and Maine, silage is recommended as the best preservation option for soybean forage. But silage is not as portable/movable (nor therefore) saleable as hay. For those who have experience with silage, beans will work. For silage the plants still need to be more than 50% green, at 35-40% DM. This will probably require wilting many NC beans in their current stage of growth. Peak stem digestibility is at R3 or R4 - (beginning to late pod) stage. The fat in more mature beans may interfere with fermentation. Dry matter testing (using the microwave method) is advisable, since most of us don't have experience measuring soybean DM. Chop at 3/8".

Soybean forage made into balage can be slightly drier. There is less information about soybean balage; but several North Carolina producers in Rowan County have been making balage, and are satisfied with the process so far. Balage will be more portable. We don't have information on the final product yet, but they are hoping for good outcomes. The big challenge (as with soybean hay) is the moisture in the stems is so much greater than moisture in the leaf portion of the plant. This makes fermentation difficult, and may adversely affect final quality of the feed.

Soybean hay

Soybean hay is routinely produced in parts of the state, especially the Northeast- north central areas. Here are some summary comments from experienced NC producers of soybean hay:

From Jeff Copeland: "Both farmers harvest at early pod stage. Both consider it a high quality feed. Neither has experienced feeding problems associated with soybean hay. One feeds 1 round bale SB hay to 2 Grass round bales at same time. Yield is approximately 1/2 of fescue hay. One farmer noted when he gets 10- round bales fescue weighing 750-800 lbs. each (scale weight), he only harvests 4 to 5 SB hay. If SB hay is stored outside, use netwrap. String is o.k. inside shelter but he lost 1/3 of bale stored outside with string.

It's worse than peanut hay about leaf shatter. Minimize times it's mechanically handled (raked, tedded)."

From Bryan Cave: "I have had lots of experience with soybeans for hay here in Surry County. It works great if the beans are cut with a mower-conditioner. If not, it takes forever for them to dry. Also, stage of maturity is HUGE in final quality of the hay. The beans here in Surry should be cut now for optimal quality. The best stage to cut is when the pods are not filled out and there are still lots of leaves. The biggest issue is when to bale, too soon and they will mold, and too late and the leaves shatter. I try to bale in the evening to cut down on leaf loss and the dust while baling is not so bad. They will change color and look brown not green after baling. The cattle consuming them do well and I typically cut some every year to stretch my other grass resources.

One important issue this year is if the producer has crop insurance he should get an Insurance Adjuster out prior to cutting to make a determination as to loss. This along with knowing which chemicals were applied is the biggest issue this year."

From Matt Poore: "With soybeans they are difficult to get cured, and a tedder will do a lot of damage to them. Best to just swath them leaving about a 4 inch stubble, and then let them get almost totally dry before doing anything else. Then, rake them before they get crispy dry in the morning and don't make the windrows too big. Once they are raked they will dry very slowly, so raking too soon is often a problem. Once they dry in the windrow for at least several more hours, you can invert the windrows for a little more drying time. It is very sensitive to shattering so rake slow and gentle.

Tedding after the leaves dry will knock most of the leaf off and reduce yield and quality. It is best if it is rolled in the late evening... Be aware that the leaf will get crispy after only one day of drying, but the stems take more like 3 or 4 days to cure especially if they are big and if there is a high yield."

From Seth Nagy: "...guys in the county have made soybean hay. Their strategy is to work it like alfalfa so leaf shatter is minimized. It takes a while to dry. They only stir it or bale it in the morning or evening when the humidity is higher."

From Amy Thomas: "Myself, along with several other producers in the area have fed soybean hay. The only thing you should be aware of is that cattle have an increased tendency to bloat on this hay more than any other. You can limit the risk by not feeding it free choice or mixing it with other grass type hay."

Note, ironically, 3 dry days are needed for making soybean hay. With soybeans there will be leaf loss, don't be tempted to bale too quickly after cutting because the stems need time to dry down, or you will have heating, mold, and losses.

Storage: Soybean hay, even round bales, will need protection from rain. Bales need to be

covered by a shed, barn or plastic. Soybean round bales will not shed rain and you will have sodden, worthless lumps. Soybean balage will also need protection.

Feed value: If you are able to use soybeans for forage they can provide excellent feed. The best soybeans for forage are in the beginning pod stage (harvested at R3 - when one of the top four nodes with a fully developed leaf has a 3/16-inch long pod). Less mature soybeans have lower protein and digestibility. Soybean silage runs 14-20 % protein, Soybean hay is high protein (averaging around 15%) and beef cattle fed soybean forage should also be fed a lower quality forage. Feed the soybean hay or silage (or pasture) as 20-30% of the ration. This will balance and stretch the quality feed. Wisconsin farmers noted that soybean silage was not as palatable to cows as alfalfa or corn silage but dairy animal production not affected. Bloat has been reported. Horses can consume soybean hay.

Timeliness: Given the condition of the crop and possible damage by rain or wind, we suggest you begin the forage harvest as soon as you have followed the procedures necessary for crop insurance and disaster payments. Harvesting before leaves become too battered, even if the plants are still flowering may be wise.

Marketing: There is absolutely a forage market, contact a county agent or the NCDA for assistance with marketing your soybean hay. They may connect you with custom haymakers who will come to your farm and bale. If you are interested in purchasing soybean forage, contact NCDA&CS or your county agent.

Conservation: Remember to leave some residue and cover in the field to protect the soil when the rain finally arrives.

This is an article I just received and knew this would be beneficial to many. This is not a hay lift or free hay but a program to help share the cost of transporting hay that producers purchase.

NCDA&CS, Golden LEAF team up to help farmers with cost of moving hay across North Carolina. Agriculture Commissioner Steve Troxler announced two programs to help drought-stricken livestock producers with the cost of transporting hay to their farms. The Golden Hay Relief Program is made possible by a \$500,000 grant from the Golden LEAF Foundation. The Ag Partners Hay Relief Program is funded by \$11,000 in donations from farm credit associations across the state.

The drought has caused an estimated \$80 million in losses of hay, pasture and forage in our state. The project's urgency stems from the threat of North Carolina losing additional farming operations and jobs if livestock operations close. The N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services will use the Golden LEAF grant to help livestock producers pay for transportation of hay and alternative feeds, such as cornstalks and soybean hay, purchased in North Carolina and trucked to their farms.

To participate, livestock producers must submit an application, available starting Monday, September 17, to the NCDA&CS. The reimbursement amount will be determined by dividing the \$500,000 by the amount of money requested in approved applications. Farmers will be reimbursed for a percentage of their transportation costs, not to exceed 50 percent. Application deadline is Dec. 31. NCDA&CS anticipates mailing reimbursement checks to farmers in February.

Farmers can download an application and eligibility criteria from the NCDA&CS Hay Alert Web site, www.ncagr.com/HayAlert or call toll free 1-866-506-6222 weekdays from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. The Hay Alert site and hotline also help farmers find hay and transportation.

Ag Partners Hay Relief Program will help farmers with the cost of moving hay purchased outside North Carolina. The department has received a total of \$11,000 in donations from Carolina Farm Credit, Cape Fear Farm Credit and East Carolina Farm Credit. The department hopes to secure additional funding for the program, Troxler said.

Beginning Wednesday, the cost-share program will reimburse farmers 50 cents per mile, up to \$300, for a load of hay moved from out of state. Reimbursements will be made on a first-come, first-served basis as long as funding is available. Farmers can participate in both the Golden Hay and the Ag Partners relief programs.

For information about this program, call the Hay Alert toll-free hotline at 1-866-506-6222.