

RUCKER'S RAMBLINGS
ANIMAL AGRICULTURE INFORMATION
LIVESTOCK, HORSES & FORAGE
DECEMBER 2008



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Yadkin Livestock Producers

Please take time to read this newsletter. I am including management tips, forage tips and announcements of several upcoming educational opportunities. Producers of all types of livestock can benefit from some part of this letter.

THERE WILL be a Yadkin County Beef Producers Meeting, Tuesday, January 6, at Deep Creek Friends Church. The meeting will begin at 6:30 PM with a sponsored meal. With winter beating down our door and pastures have dwindled down, we will be discussing better ways to supplement adequate nutrition to your cow herd. There are many products on the market and we will discuss some of the things to look for when selecting a supplement. We will also discuss some forage management practices to help prepare your pastures for the upcoming grazing season. Bryan Blinson, the Executive Director of the NC Cattlemen's Association will be with us to discuss the association as well as the state of the cattle industry.

Call the Extension Office at 679-2061, BEFORE 5:00 PM FRIDAY, JANUARY 2, 2009, to make reservations. We need an accurate count so food preparations can be made.

Special accommodations will be made for the physically disabled, vision or hearing impaired person upon request. If special accommodations are required, please call 679-2061, one week prior to the event or activity.

MARK YOUR calendars now to attend the Statesville Regional Beef Conference, Thursday, January 8, 2009. The program offers something that every cattle producer can use. Some of the topics to be covered are: Drought Recovery, New Technologies in the Beef Industry, Beef Production in the New Economic Environment, Trends in Cattle Marketing and Animal Health Products Update. This conference has been useful and educational for the many participants, providing information to help producers make wise decisions concerning their operations.

The conference starts at 3:30 PM at the Iredell Agricultural Resources Center, 444 Bristol Dr., Statesville, NC. There will be a sponsored meal at the conclusion of the conference. Please mark your calendar to attend this event. It looks like a program that you don't want to miss. Call the Extension Office for more details or to make reservations.

HORSE OWNERS should make time to evaluate, with your veterinarian, your heard health program and any changes or updates that are needed, to assure your horse stays healthy. Also discuss your feeding program and if any adjustments are needed. Don't change a horse's feed ration without advice from a veterinarian or other qualified source. Even small changes in the ration can offset delicate mineral ratios that could have a negative effect on your horse.

THE EXTENSION CENTER will be closed December 24, 25 & 26, 2008 as well as January 1, 2009 for observed holidays. We trust you will take time to spend with your families.

MANAGEMENT TIPS

- * Make sure ALL LIVESTOCK have fresh clean water available at all times.
- * Keep your horse's coat clean from mud. Mud reduces the natural insulation properties.
- * Check your hay and feed supplies and make arrangements to maintain adequate supplies.
- * Utilize feeding strategies to reduce wasted feed
- * Get those hooves checked out by your farrier. Winter is tough on feet and legs.
- * Make sure livestock are healthy. Healthy animals can handle cold weather much better.
- * Plan pasture management issues now so you will be ready to implement in the spring.
 - Soil Test so you will know if pastures need lime and how much fertilizer.
 - Evaluate forage stands and plan re-seeding, stocking rates and other needs.
- * Think about weeds that were a problem and make plans to control them in 2009.
- * Be realistic and honest with your situation and be ready to adjust as needed.
- * Formulate a plan to help you better prepare for disasters and down years.
- * Reduce Stocking Rate to reduce stress on grass and improve forage vigor.

THE ALLIANCE is trying to organize a mineral and protein supplements order to try and take advantage of a buying in volume price break. If you are interested, please contact Eddie Leagans at 336/998-2515 as soon as possible. He needs to know of anyone's interest so he can get the order put together. It's a good way to provide quality nutrition for your cattle at a reduced price.

2008 – 2009 EQUINE SHORT COURSE & CLINIC SERIES is accepting registrations. These educational programs are 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, Judge's Certification Training, foaling and Foal Management, Feeding, Animal Cruelty Issues and the 4-H Horse Leaders Conference. The classes start December 2008 and run into may 2009. 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, come by or call the Extension Center 679-2061, or contact the Horse Husbandry Dept. 919/515-5784 or www.cals.ncsu.edu/an_sci/extension/horse/hhmain.html.

KEEP IN TOUCH with current news and events. Visit our website to view upcoming events, meetings, news and current events. I'm not the most computer savvy person but I will try to update the site on a regular basis. Please visit the website at: <http://yadkin.ces.ncsu.edu>.

IF YOU ARE LOOKING for a new herdsire, there are a few bull sales scheduled in the near future. If you need a good herdsire, contact the Extension office at 679-2061 and I'll provide you information on upcoming sales, as well as put you in touch with producers who have bulls for sale.

Sincerely,

Phillip Rucker, Jr.
Extension Agent
Agriculture – Livestock
Davie & Yadkin Counties

As of January 1, 2009 my new schedule is as follows:

Monday & Tuesday- Davie County
Wednesday & Thursday – Yadkin County
Fridays- 1st, 3rd, and 5th – Davie County
Fridays- 2nd & 4th – Yadkin County

Schedule will be subject to change according to needs in counties.

COOL IS HERE, ARE YOU READY? The Mandatory Country Of Origin Labeling (MCOOL) is a federal law and began October 1, 2008. Retailers must label certain products with one of 4 labels: US Origin, Multiple Countries of origin that include the United States, Imported Direct for slaughter and Imported Beef. Of course there are some exemptions. This is a law for retailers, not farmers. It is a marketing program, not a food safety program. It is based on source verification and farmers will more than likely be asked to sign an affidavit verifying where the cattle, they are selling, were born or purchased from. This is where some basic farm records come in handy. With basic records, you can show that your calves were born on your farm or where any purchased cattle originated. When buyers begin to require the affidavit, failure to sign this document could result in serious discounts for cattle being sold or the buyers not wanting to purchase them.

- * MCOOL is a Federal Law that began October 1, 2008
- * Retailers must label products with one of four (4) labels: U.S. Origin, Multiple Countries of Origin that include the United States, Imported Direct for Slaughter & Imported Beef
- * Some Exemptions: Foodservice, Small Retailers, Processed Food, NAIS Participants
- * MCOOL is a law for retailers, not farmers. A Marketing Program, not a Food Safety Program
- * MCOOL is Mandatory and requires a One Time Affidavit for proof, not Costly Ear Tags
- * MCOOL does not require Premises ID

The 2008 Farm bill states that in order to comply with MCOOL: records maintained in the course of the normal business of such person, including animal health papers, import or custom documents or producer affidavits, may serve as such verification. Come to the January 6, 2009 Beef Producers Meeting or contact me to learn more.

PLAN TO ATTEND THE DIRECT MARKETING BEEF PRODUCTS WORKSHOP

coming up. There is strong demand for farm finished, direct marketed beef and the current economics of cow-calf production has our producers looking for alternatives. There are opportunities but it is not for everyone and these workshops are intended to help producers figure out if these are opportunities for them. There will be no registration fee but PLEASE register for the workshop you plan to attend (**only need to attend one**) to help with food preparations. These producer meetings will be held on the following dates and at these locations:

Tuesday, January 13th 2009 at Mount Olive College, Mount Olive, NC. For registrations call Krystal Faison, Administrative Assistant at the Agribusiness Center at 919-658-7510.

Wednesday, Jan. 14th 2009 at the Davidson Co. Extension Office, Lexington, NC. For reservations call (336) 242-2080. Driving directions are available from the Davidson County Extension web page at <http://davidson.ces.ncsu.edu/>

Thursday, Jan 15th 2009 at the Mountain Horticultural Research and Extension Center, Fletcher, NC. For reservations call (828) 687-0570 Ext. 122. Driving directions are available from the MHREC web page at <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/fletcher/>

These producer meetings will run from 9 am to 3 pm, approximately. Program content will include effective marketing, alternative livestock production systems for finishing beef, forage production systems, risk and risk management strategies, and the economics of going from a cow-calf operation to finishing cattle and direct marketing beef. Production systems will include all forage fed, limited grain finishing and heavy grain finishing regimes. Call the office for more information.

IF YOU HEARD ABOUT THE “COW TAX” RUMOR, you can rest easy for now. I have received NUMEROUS calls concerning the proposed “COW TAX” the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was going to impose as part of the Clean Air Act (CAA). Here is some information I have about this issue.

A recent Environmental Protection Agency rule-making report triggered much speculation and interpretation that the agency would likely impose a "tax" on livestock and dairy operations for methane emissions. The 570-page report's objective was to outline ways to implement the Clean Air Act. It mostly dealt with automobile and factory emissions but also included sections related to reducing livestock methane emissions. EPA officials state that the report should not be interpreted that the agency will actually tax farmers for their livestock or dairy animals.

Upon the report's release, the agricultural community's red flags quickly flew. For example, the American Farm Bureau Federation estimated the report's exploration of farmers with 25 dairy cows or 50 beef cattle would be expected to buy permits for each ton of methane those animals released, and that it could cost farmers \$175 per dairy cow and \$87.50 per beef cow annually. AFBF circulated a document outlining this prospect.

EPA has since released a statement, saying that it is currently reviewing public comments on proposed rule changes to the CAA. The agency said, however, that it is not proposing a “cow tax” as a way to regulate Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions. Sen. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) also has further clarified the concept, saying that he has written to EPA to drop any consideration of imposing such fees.

Catherine Milbourn, EPA spokesperson, also told the Times Union, of Albany, N.Y., that EPA has not proposed a livestock/dairy tax and hasn't said that it will target farmers as it decides how to move forward in enforcing the CAA.

An aide to South Dakota Sen. John Thune says a bill to exempt livestock from the Clean Air Act has been filed with the clerk of the US Senate. Sen. Thune says that such legislation would, in effect eliminate the chance that cattle and other livestock will be taxed as a way to cut down on the alleged contribution to air pollution. Thune said the CAA was designed to target smokestacks in individual states and not farm and ranch livestock.

Parts of the CAA made reference to methane and livestock and EPA's comment period on the CAA fueled speculation of action that might be taken against livestock. The EPA states that there is no such “Livestock Tax” proposal planned, at this time. The “at this time” is a critical statement as it does leave the door open to potential action in the future.

American Farm Bureau as well as national and state cattle associations are actively monitoring this matter. These groups are studying the developments, rules, proposals as well as submitting comments of opposition and contacting elected officials.

Contact me or come to the Jan. 6 Beef Producers Meeting to get more information on this issue. If you feel so led, speak with your elected officials (Washington and Raleigh) about the potential damage something like this would have on the livestock industry. Stress to them that if something like this is proposed and could become reality, it needs to be addressed and defeated quickly. The effects of such a tax would devastate the livestock industry and negatively impact our nation's economy.