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RUCKERS RAMBLINGS  
ANIMAL AGRICULTURE INFORMATION  
AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2021

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## **BEEF PRODUCER MEETING**

There will be a meeting for Davie and Yadkin County Beef Producers **Tuesday, September 7, 2021**. The meeting will be held at the Yadkin County Agricultural and Educational Building, in Yadkinville, beginning at 6:30 PM. We all know that the weather has been very inconsistent, some stands of forage have struggled and some are in critical shape. As we enter the last month of summer, and autumn is closing in, we need to make plans for our forage needs. NOW is the time to evaluate forage stands and estimate your stored forage supplies to help you decide if you need to plant some fall/winter grazing. Many producers are asking questions about planting different forages to get them through the fall and winter. The dry weather caused a lot of concern this summer about their forage supply heading into fall. If you have concerns and questions, come September 7 to hear Dr. Deidre Harmon with NC State Cooperative Extension discuss the advantages of planting winter grazing to help provide your herd ample forage as the weather starts to turn colder. Dr. Harmon is a beef/forage specialist and has completed numerous trials on winter grazing crops like ryegrass, small grain and others to supplement your cowherd reducing your dependence on hay and other stored feeds. We will also discuss Possible Options If Your Hay Supplies Start To Run Short. Come and get your questions answered and learn how these practices can enhance your winter forage program.

**COVID PROTOCOL** for this meeting: Since this meeting is indoors and being held in a government facility, it is strongly suggested that participants wear a mask to help slow the spread of the virus and if you are unvaccinated. You are also encouraged to social distance during this event.

At the last Davie-Yadkin Cattlemen's meeting, a motion was made to charge \$10 per individual, for the meal (if they ate). The meeting/educational program is still free to all. The motion was seconded, voted on and passed by the membership. So the meeting and program are free but if you plan to eat, there will be a \$10 per person charge. You can pay with cash or a check made out to Davie-Yadkin Cattlemen's Assoc. Due to this change, **IF YOU PLAN TO EAT; RESERVATIONS ARE REQUIRED!!!** Please call the Extension Center in Davie 336/753-6100, Yadkin 336/849-7908 or email [phil\\_rucker@ncsu.edu](mailto:phil_rucker@ncsu.edu) **NO LATER THAN 3:00 PM, Thursday, September 2, 2021**, to reserve your meal or for more information. Food will be ordered based on reservations.

The educational portion is free and will begin a little after 7:00 PM. This will be a great program to help you prepare to supply your cattle with the feed they need this winter to help them meet your production goals.

*Special accommodations will be made for the physically disabled, vision or hearing impaired person upon request. If special accommodations are required, please call Phil Rucker 753-6100 (Davie) or 849-7908 (Yadkin), at least one week before the scheduled event.*

**\*\*Please visit our websites at [davie.ces.ncsu.edu](http://davie.ces.ncsu.edu) or [yadkin.ces.ncsu.edu](http://yadkin.ces.ncsu.edu) to see the many programs and events we offer. Bet you can find at least one program you will want to attend.**



## **MANAGEMENT TIPS**

- # Soil Test to know what fertilizer your forage will need to be productive this coming spring. Submit samples by November 15 to avoid the \$4 per sample charge from Dec. 1 - March 31.
- # Check your feed inventory. Be prepared to purchase supplemental feed to assure you have enough for the winter.
- # Prepare for calving, foaling, lambing or kidding season. Have supplies & the veterinarian's number close at hand.
- # If in need of a new herd sire, don't wait until the last minute. **Start Looking NOW!**
- # Reduce Stocking Rate to reduce stress on grass and improve forage vigor.
- # Keep livestock healthy, they will utilize feed more efficiently. Don't waste feed on non-productive animals.
- # Test your hay to make sure of its nutrient content before you start to feed it. The NCDA Lab is moving buildings and samples are temporarily being sent to another lab. Contact me if you want to have hay tested.
- # Formulate a plan to help you better prepare for future decisions.

## **FORAGE MANAGEMENT TIPS FOR ALL SPECIES**

In many parts of the county, it has been dry. This has hurt the available forage for many producers. Now is the time to assess your available and stored forage to calculate if you have enough. AND IF YOU DON'T, make plans to address the shortage. If it looks like you may run short of grazing and/or not have enough hay to carry you through the winter, run through some options NOW and don't wait until you have to make some difficult choices. You might have less options and end up choosing the lesser of the evils. Never a good situation. Always better to be proactive and you might be able to come out ahead instead of trying to reduce your losses. A few practices to think about are:

- # Reduce stocking rate to keep from damaging your grass. Evaluate fertilization, weed control, grazing program and other forage management practices. See if there are some things to improve. A healthier stand of grass can withstand adverse weather conditions and other issues.
- # Calculate all feed sources (grazing, stored, etc.), animal numbers, weights, daily needs and how long it will last.
- # Wean offspring a little early if applicable. Allows "Mom" a little extra time to recover and they need less feed when not nursing. Weaned babies can compensate well on a little feed and maintain good growth.
- # Market/cull animals that are less productive, unproductive, show physical defects, have "attitude" issues, don't fit into your program, etc. Why feed something that doesn't work for you? Many times it's more economical to market livestock and buy less feed than to maintain a larger herd with some who are not holding up their end of the bargain.
- # Make adjustments before your animals begin losing body condition. Putting weight/condition on thin animals is tough enough. Accomplishing this during the winter when nutritional needs are higher, is nearly impossible.
- # Make plans to plant a cool season annual, stockpile fescue, utilize rotational grazing or other forage management options to help supply your livestock with enough forage to help them perform.
- # Deworm, vaccinate, control flies, avoid pinkeye and the multitude of other health management practices that help keep livestock healthy. Healthy livestock will utilize feed more efficiently and perform better as a whole.
- # Think about providing protein/nutritional supplements: even this early in the year. If the grass is real dry, the nutritional value could be low, and supplying a little extra nutrition could make all the difference in the world.

There's plenty more management practices to consider. Please don't wait until you are behind the 8-ball and HAVE to do something. Many times it is not the decision you originally wanted. Contact me for other ways to stretch your forage.

## **DATES TO REMEMBER**

September 4	NC Simmental Fall Harvest Sale, 12:30 PM in Union Grove
September 7	Cattlemen Meeting, Yadkin County Agriculture & Education Building, 6:30 PM in Yadkinville
September 15	Selling Beef by the Quarter, Half or Whole: Webinar Workshop 12:00 Noon
September 23	Soil Biodiversity and Soil Health Webinar 7:00 PM

## **CALCULATE YOUR FEED RESOURCES**

Be sure to evaluate your feed resources to see if you have adequate amounts and the quality is sufficient. Purchasing feed spur of the moment can be costly and you might not get what you need/want. Having plenty of low quality feed can be just as bad since livestock can have difficulty consuming enough poor quality feed to meet their nutritional needs. Check your supplies, test forages if you have questions, figure up the number and size of animals to feed and performance expectations. It takes more, high quality feed for mamas nursing babies, young growing livestock, females trying to rebreed and first time mamas trying to raise a baby and breed back. Sorting livestock to match feed with needs can help reduce feed usage. Marketing low performing or livestock you really can't justify keeping, is a good option as well.

Remember we just went through a year of inconsistent rain patterns and many of us have gone or are going through drought conditions. This has caused quite a bit of stress to many forage stands. Hay is thin and the quality is questionable. Pastures are showing the effects of the long dry spell. Think about supplying supplemental feed now to stretch grazing and reduce the long term damage of overgrazing. Look at by-product feeds to help supplement livestock. Plan how much you will need and start talking with feed suppliers to lock in what you will need. Take all of this into account when figuring your winter feed plan.

When grazing gets short, there are basically three options to look at: Find more grazeable land, Supplement with hay/other feeds, and/or Market/Sell livestock. Plan now to provide enough quality nutrition to keep your livestock at the proper body condition and health status. It's much easier and cheaper to maintain livestock at the proper condition than to try and feed weight on them during stressful times. Contact the Extension Center if we can help you with your options.

## **STOCKPILING FORAGES CHEAPER THAN FEEDING HAY**

Extension livestock budgets show winter feed costs make up 60 percent of total expenses for the typical fall calving cow/calf producer who feeds hay. One way to lower feed costs is by stockpiling forages for winter grazing. Stockpiling is a process of allowing forage to accumulate growth during the late summer and fall to be grazed by cattle instead of the normal practice of feeding hay after the growing season has ended. Most cow/calf producers, who stockpile, will make the last hay cutting or remove cattle from pastures in early to mid-August and top dress with fertilizer to allow these fields sufficient time and nutrients for regrowth before growth stops in the fall. This practice works with most types of livestock.

Tall fescue is a common cool season grass found on most farms and is ideal for stockpiling. It produces both higher yields and forage quality when compared to other cool season grasses used for stockpiled winter grazing. Studies show that stockpiled fescue contains more energy and crude protein than average grass hay.

## **HAY DIRECTORY**

This year I have had only a few requests to purchase hay. At the present time, I have a few individuals with hay for sell. As the weather changes, the hay for sell supply could be reduced. If you have hay for sell or need to purchase hay, contact the Extension Office and maybe I can help folks meet their needs. Don't wait until you are feeding that last bale to start hunting.

## **NC FARM SCHOOL IS COMING**

If you want to start a small agriculture enterprise, improve your operation or know someone who is interested in farming, consider attending the NC Farm School. This series of courses and field days starts in February 2022 and runs through May. You meet twice a month for educational classes and there will be 4 different field days to visit different operations. A great way to see different agricultural enterprises and gain valuable information from different speakers with lots of expertise to share. Participants will gain basic information in management, marketing, finances record keeping and more. Registration details are being finalized. If you or someone you know is interested, contact the Extension office for more information to register for this opportunity.

## **HORSE MANAGEMENT TIPS**

Please make time to evaluate, with your veterinarian, your herd 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.

Make sure you have an ample supply of quality hay to get your equine friends through the winter. Weather is becoming more difficult to predict. You don't want to get caught short of hay. Make your hay arrangements NOW!

Check the barn and other facilities for wear and maintenance needs. Loose boards, nails that stick out, broken gate hinges and other hazards could cause potential injury for your horse. Loose roofing materials that flop in the wind could startle your horse. Take the time to look around and fix any potential issues before they become a problem. Talk with your farrier about getting your horses feet ready for the change in temperature and the upcoming winter weather. Have your farrier examine your horse's hooves to avoid any unexpected surprises later in the year.

Mosquito season is not over yet so keep those pesky bugs away. There have been some eastern horses confirmed with mosquito transferred diseases. Not much longer and hopefully the mosquitoes will be gone.

## **PASTURE MANAGEMENT TIPS**

The inconsistent weather of this last year (very wet and then very dry) has hurt most pastures and hay fields. Even with adequate rainfall, grass can make a temporary recovery but will probably struggle to be productive due to the stress this dry summer has inflicted. Be prepared to give your grass what it needs to recover and produce quality forage in the future. Take the time to test your fields so you will know what fertilizers will give you the most bang for your buck. Don't look at fertilizer as an expense but more as an investment in the future of your grass land. Without the proper nutrients, grass will not be productive and applying proper nutrients this coming year will be very important to help your forage try to recover as well as be productive. At the very least, apply the recommended lime to correct pH problems so whatever nutrients are in the soil can be utilized by the plant. A Soil Test will help you apply what the forage needs, in proper amounts so you will spend your fertilizer dollar more wisely. Come by the office to get your soil test boxes and help your pastures work more efficiently for you.

Evaluate the amount of grass you have, the number and size of livestock and estimate how long your livestock can graze before they start to compromise the forage by overgrazing. Overgrazing is one of the worst things you can let happen to your pastures. This weakens the stand of grass and we all know what happens to weak grass: WEEDS, WEEDS and more WEEDS. Make a grazing plan to try to keep your livestock from overgrazing. If not, when spring comes, your grass stands a good chance of getting a slow start and that's never a good thing.

Remember, we are all GRASS FARMERS first and then we have livestock to consume the grass we grow. With quality grass, you have more options to feed your livestock in a cost effective and natural way. When the grass suffers, then you have to spend money to get hay, feed and other supplements.

## **GOT WEEDS?**

With the inconsistent weather, grass was set back some and guess what: weeds got a little edge in most of our forage stands. Weather inhibited some spraying and allowed weeds to grow a little bit more. I've heard of and even seen some weeds we don't usually have much issue with. Not a good situation for many livestock producers. Now the hot dry weather is taking a toll on trying to control weeds over the last couple of months. Herbicides have not been as effective because the dry weather has slowed down activity in many plants so herbicides are not as readily absorbed and transferred through the plant, which reduces control. I have had producers call about their attempts to control weeds only to get less than desired results. The plants are just not as receptive to herbicides during extremely dry conditions. Don't think that increasing the application rate will help because it might not be any more effective. Plus the added amount could add days to withdrawal times or injure desired grasses and plants. Also you could exceed label recommendations and remember, by law you are not supposed to exceed label amounts.

Right now you need to identify the weeds so a battle plan can be organized. There are some toxic weeds that could cause problems if consumed. The good thing is most livestock stay away from toxic plants (smell, taste, stickers, etc.) unless there is not much else for them to eat. If you think you have a toxic weed, evaluate your forage supply, move animals out if necessary, mow the weeds if herbicides have not worked. Some areas have gotten some rain to rejuvenate plants providing another opportunity to control weeds. Contact me if you think you need a weed identified. Sometimes a picture sent by email is good enough for me to figure it out. It does help to have as much of the plant as possible in the picture(s). Keeping weeds from going to seed now will pay dividends in the coming years. Make the time to scout for weeds. You've got to know who the enemy is before you know the best way to fight them.

## **SELLING BEEF BY THE QUARTER, HALF, OR WHOLE: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW**

If you are a producer who sells freezer beef or a consumer who likes to purchase beef from local producers, this program will enlighten you on the processing aspects of the freezer beef business. Join Cooperative Extension, NC Choices & M.L. Mitchell and Son Meat Processor for a virtual webinar detailing cut sheets and how to complete them, underutilized cuts and cuts that are increasing in popularity. This webinar will be held Wednesday, September 15, starting at 12:00 PM. Great opportunity to learn about different ways to have the carcass processed to better utilize those delicious and wholesome cuts of beef.

The link to register is: <https://go.ncsu.edu/beefcutsheets>

## **SOIL YOUR UNDERWEAR: TESTS FOR SOIL BIODIVERSITY AND SOIL HEALTH**

Did you know cotton underwear can be used to assess soil biological activity? This idea, developed by Amazing Grazing, has spread around the world as it sparks people's interest and makes them pay attention to what is going on in their soil. The Center for Environmental Farming Systems (CEFS) and Amazing Grazing will be hosting a FREE virtual event on **Thursday, September 23rd** about soil health, how to assess soil health, and why it matters. A panel of soil experts will discuss "indicators" and tests you can perform in your own backyard to determine the health and biodiversity of your soil. They will take a look at soil tests including the foam test, slake test, runoff demo, dung beetle buckets, etc. We will be joined by soil experts Alan Franzluebbbers, Johnny Rogers, Matthew Poore, Paige Smart and Sharon Freeman for this one hour webinar.

**Thursday, September 23rd from 7:00-8:00pm:**

**Register:** [Soil Your Underwear: Tests for Soil Biodiversity and Soil Health](#)

***Please register using the link above. A Zoom link will be sent via email once you have registered.***

For any additional questions or information about this project, contact Sharon Freeman, [sfreeman@ncsu.edu](mailto:sfreeman@ncsu.edu). For questions about the event, contact Emma Hirsch, [erhirsch@ncsu.edu](mailto:erhirsch@ncsu.edu).