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RUCKER'S RAMBLINGS
ANIMAL AGRICULTURE INFORMATION
LIVESTOCK, HORSES & FORAGE
JUNE 2022

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LOTS OF PROGRAMS, EVENTS & HAPPENINGS

There is plenty of opportunities to attend some close-by events, field days and more to help you gain knowledge to improve your livestock operations. Some are virtual and many are in-person. As you look through this newsletter and absorb every word, or at least some useful tidbits, check out the upcoming educational opportunities and try to attend as many as you can. Seeing what other producers are doing, listening to current research and swapping experiences with fellow producers will usually provide some good management practices to utilize on your operation. Be mindful of event dates, registration deadlines and how to register. Hope to see you at some of these opportunities.

A FEW THOUGHTS OFF THE TOP OF MY HEAD

* For information on upcoming programs, as well as what Extension has to offer, visit our website to learn more. There are many interesting programs going on with 4-H, Horticulture, Row Crops, Family & Consumer Science and more. Visit <https://davie.ces.ncsu.edu> or <https://yadkin.ces.edu> to learn more about all the programs we offer.

* The calendar says its spring but the temperatures have been climbing some. A sure sign that summer is close by. Make plans to help your livestock, and yourself, through the upcoming season as stress free as possible.

* With warm temperatures come the increased possibility of pink eye in cattle. This is a painful issue for cattle and reduces their value. Some simple ways to reduce the chance of pink eye is to control flies, try to keep pastures mowed so the tall grass does not irritate eyes and talk with your veterinarian about vaccinating against this problem. Better to be proactive and prevent pink eye than the labor, stress and money it takes to treat it.

* Sheep production is increasing in Davie & Yadkin Counties and the surrounding area. This leads to a need for someone to shear these wool covered livestock, unless you have hair type sheep. I have receive calls about shearers for hire, but there are not many in the area. If local breeders could pool together and work to line up shearing their flocks at the same time, it might be cost effective for a professional shearer to schedule a couple days in Davie or Yadkin and shear a bunch of sheep to make it worth his time. I am working with a producer or 2 who are interested in trying to get enough sheep producers to take advantage of this possibility probably next year. Email me at phil_rucker@ncsu.edu if you are interested. We will see if there is enough interest to pursue this opportunity.

HERD HEALTH TO-DO LIST FOR LIVESTOCK

* Vaccinate equine (horses, donkeys, mules) against West Nile Virus, Eastern Equine Encephalomyelitis and other issues your veterinarian recommends. Take precautions to minimize standing water where mosquitoes breed.

* Check pastures for toxic plants/trees and treat accordingly. Repair fences, barns and working facilities.

* Be vigilant in your war against worms & flies! Use the most cost effective options.

* Mow pastures to keep seed heads down to reduce eye irritation, reduce weeds and keep forage in growth stage.

* **WITH THE SOON ARRIVAL OF SUMMER HEAT, MAKE SURE YOUR LIVESTOCK HAVE PLENTY OF FRESH CLEAN WATER**



HELPING YOUR PASTURES THROUGH THE SUMMER

Over the last year or so the rainfall has been very inconsistent. Some have had more than others and some have been very dry. At the time of this newsletter, it's true, we are getting dry and many could use some rain. There is nothing we can do about the rain but there are a few management practices you can implement to help you cope if grass gets a little short. We are seeing some effects of rising temperatures and falling rain amounts. The cool season grasses (fescue, orchardgrass, etc.) are slowing down and some have headed out. The inconsistent temperatures a few weeks ago hastened the seed head formation and slowed down the grasses. If you have some warm season forages, you might be in a better position. But when we are lacking moisture, most pastures will produce less grass which could put our grazing livestock in a bad position. We are still early in this game and by following a few management practices, you might be able to help your grass continue to grow and provide your livestock quality forage.

Implement Rotational Grazing: By moving livestock from paddock to paddock, you give your grass a rest and that allows it to rejuvenate and start to regrow. We all feel better after some rest and so does our grass. You can influence livestock to eat older tougher forage and weeds instead of letting them go to waste. You get a better more even distribution of manure which is good for your fertilization program.

Fence in unused areas with temporary fence and use for grazing. There are plenty of grass areas that are not fenced in that have usable forage just waiting to be grazed. Look around your farm for these opportunities. Just make sure they have access to water. You might be surprised at the places around the farm you could temporarily graze.

Implement a good weed control program: If you have not treated for weeds yet, look at your options. Weeds are thieves who like nothing more than to steal water and nutrients from the forages you work so hard to grow. They crowd out grass and many taste bad or have thorns which keep livestock from grazing the forages close to the weeds. Weed control is an easy way to improve the quality and quantity of forages you provide your livestock.

Watch your Stocking Rate: TOO MANY animals on TOO FEW acres leads to "diseases" like "Extreme Bovine Anemia", "Extreme Equine Anemia" and a few other species related anemias. These "Made-up disease names" have nothing to do with the animals losing blood. These issues occur when there are TOO MANY animals on TOO FEW acres, sucking the life blood out of the forage and land. Stocking guidelines are designed to provide some flexibility and allow the grass to not be overgrazed during abnormal situations. Make sure you don't overstock your pastures.

Plant Summer Forages: planting warm season forages will add a dimension to your grazing that should hold up better during the hot dry times of summer. Lots of options to fit your livestock and grazing program.

Reduce herd numbers. Wean early. Supplement with feed. These have positive sides and drawbacks. They can help stretch your grazing but could increase purchased feed cost. Push a pencil on these options.

Some still have decent grass but, the situation could change quickly. Using some of the above options now will help reduce the possibility of running short of grass this summer. Don't wait too late to make adjustments. Livestock were designed to get most of their nutrition from grazing. When grass gets short, livestock can become thin and lose production. Even worse, it could lead to increased health issues. We are all busy but it's in your best interest (and your livestock's) to assess your grazing situation, look at options and make plans to provide plenty of quality grazing for your herd. As livestock producers, that is your responsibility.

*****NEEDING, BUYING & SELLING HAY:** The wacky weather of 2021 and the start of 2022 along with higher input costs, many folks wonder if they will make enough hay or can purchase enough for the upcoming year. It would be wise to survey stored hay resources and try to make contact with suppliers to organize your hay needs. This is the year to be proactive. If you will have hay for sale (round and square) contact me and I'll add you to my list.

CATTLE MARKETING OPPORTUNITY

We mentioned this earlier and are hoping to get more producers interested. Cattle producers have discussed putting together truckload lots of calves to market to order buyers. These calves needed to be similar in size, body type, weight, condition and prefer all the same sex. Lots of talk but the loads never transpired. With cattle prices where they are, input costs climbing and the need to add value to your calves has never been more important. A group of producers are asking if individuals might be interested in marketing truckloads. The group is trying to see what interest there might be. Comingling calves allows producers with smaller herds to market their calves in larger loads creating more value for everyone's calves. Right now we are gathering names of interested producers and one day soon, we will get together and start making plans. Email me phil_rucker@ncsu.edu or Ricky Karriker at specialgoat@yadtel.net you have an interest. The goal is to try and meet in a few weeks. With inconsistent cattle prices and increasing input costs, a little help on the selling price is always a good thing.

****UPCOMING WORKSHOPS:** Make plans to attend these educational opportunities

NC A&T SMALL FARMS FIELD DAY:

NC A&T is having their Small Farms Field Day, Thursday, June 23rd from 8:00 am to 1:00 pm at the NC A&T University Farm in Greensboro. Here is the link to the webpage with complete information and the registration link - <https://www.ncat.edu/caes/cooperative-extension/small-scale-agriculture-development/sffd/index.php> Topics are horticulture, crops and some livestock. Click on the above link and see if you might want to attend.

PASTURE PLANT DIVERSITY FIELD DAY & WORKSHOP:

June 25, 9 a.m.-2:00 p.m.; at Beaver Creek Farm in Surry County. **Research Farm Pavilion, Greensboro.** This in person workshop will cover regenerative grazing, improving soils and forage options available to you. Come learn about Native Warm Season Grasses, novel Endophyte Fescue, perennial mixes and more. This event is free but you MUST register by Monday, June 20, 2022. Call the Surry Extension office at 336-401-8025 or go the Eventbrite link - <https://go.ncsu.edu/pasturediversity> An address will be provided upon registering. Lunch will be provided just bring a chair to sit in. Check the attached flier for more details.

FORAGE FIELD DAY:

There will be a Forage Field Day, Friday, July 15, 2002, at the Piedmont Research Station in Salisbury. The program begins at 9:00 AM and will conclude around 12:00 noon. Topics of discussion will be variety plots for seed type bermudagrass, tall fescue and orchardgrass. They will cover productivity and nutritive value of bermudagrass in the piedmont. Weed management strategies for establishing and maintenance of bermudagrass pastures. Great opportunity to gain some insight on forage production. The event is free. Snacks and water will be provided. To register, please contact Morgan Watts, Rowan County Extension Agent 704—216-8970 or amwatts@ncsu.edu. See the attached flier for mor details.

LOCAL SOIL & WATER DISTRICTS OFFER EQUIPMENT TO USE

The Soil & Water Conservation Districts offer useful equipment for farmers to rent. The Yadkin office 336-518-3929, has several No-till drills of various sizes. Contact them for availability and rates

The Davie office 336-751-5011 has a No-till drill, plastic layer, post driver and a newly purchased portable cattle working chute. Contact them for availability and rates.

Don't forget to contact your local Soil and Water about their Cost Share Programs. Call to see if you are eligible.

VACCINATE EQUINE AGAINST MOSQUITO-BORNE DISEASES:

If you have not already done so, equine owners are encouraged to have their equine vaccinated against Eastern Equine Encephalomyelitis, West Nile Virus and other mosquito-borne diseases. April until November is prime mosquito-breeding season in North Carolina and when equine are at risk if not properly vaccinated. EEE is fatal 90 percent of the time and WNV has a fatality rate of 30 percent. Both diseases are preventable by vaccination.

Equine owners should talk to their veterinarians about an effective vaccination protocol to protect them from mosquito-borne diseases. The combination vaccination initially requires multiple injections for horses, mules and donkeys that have no prior vaccination history.

Mosquitoes can breed in any puddle that lasts for more than four days, so removing any source of standing water can reduce the chance of exposing animals to WNV or EEE. Keeping horses in stalls at night, using insect screens and fans and turning off lights after dusk can also help reduce exposure to mosquitoes. Insect repellants can be effective if used according to the manufacturer's instructions.

If your equine exhibit any symptoms of EEE or WNV, contact your veterinarian immediately. People, equine and birds can become infected from a bite by a mosquito carrying the diseases, but there is no evidence that horses can transmit the viruses to other horses, birds or people through direct contact. It's also a great time to make sure your animal is current on its rabies vaccination. In North Carolina we see a few cases of rabies in livestock each year.

MOISTURE CAN LEAD TO MOSQUITO ACTIVITY

We all love the warmer weather but with that warm weather, mosquito activity increases. All the moisture we received a while back could increase the mosquito activity. Before planning your chemical assault on the biting menaces, you can put a dent in populations by using some tips to reduce mosquito breeding grounds around your home or barn. Mosquitoes take advantage of water-filled objects as breeding sites. If you have not done so, search for and correct problems before mosquitoes become unwelcomed guests the next time you are outdoors.

It is important to do a "Yard and Barn Check" to identify and eliminate mosquito breeding grounds. Mosquitoes must have standing water to breed. Eliminating standing water sources drastically reduces mosquito populations. Empty, invert or discard buckets, tires, dishes under potted plants and tarp coverings and other water-collecting items. Birdbaths make great observation posts for watching mosquito larvae and alert you to an impending invasion. It's wise to flush out the birdbath often. Same thing applies to outdoor pet water bowls. Livestock water troughs out in pastures can be a little tougher since they're not always as easily flushed out.

Unclog rain gutters as decaying leaf material and other debris attract mosquitoes. Downspouts should direct water away from the house and not create a big puddle. Rain barrels that collect runoff, need to have the openings screened. This helps keep out the junk and the mosquitoes out as well.

Use a good insect repellent, wear long pants and long sleeved shirts when the potential for a mosquito attack is high. Avoid activities when mosquitoes are most active, such as early morning and dusk. Talk with your neighbors as mosquito control takes a community effort. If your neighbors don't take action, then their mosquitoes might decide to pay you a visit sometime.

During warm damp weather, the potential for an increase in the mosquito population is high. Take action now to reduce the potential in your yard, barn and surrounding area. For more information on mosquito control, contact Cooperative Extension in Davie at 336-753-6100 or Yadkin at 336-849-7908.