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RUCKER'S RAMBLINGS
ANIMAL AGRICULTURE INFORMATION
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MANAGEMENT TIPS I list these often but most are worth repeating (many times).

- # It's getting cooler and livestock will need more calories/energy/feed to meet their production needs plus stay warm.
- # Check all facilities, equipment, water supplies, etc. to make sure your operation is prepared for winter.
- # Calculate stocking rates for ALL pastures and make sure you do not overgraze. That causes the spring growth to be slow, allowing weeds to get a head start. Properly grazed pastures respond well to spring fertilizer and water.
- # Keep livestock healthy, they will utilize feed more efficiently.
- # Keep your horses coat clean from mud. Mud reduces the natural insulation properties.
- # Soil test to plan for your 2023 fertilizer application. Yes, you will pay the \$4 per sample fee but, this is a small price to pay for valuable information that could save you untold fertilizer dollars this spring.
- # Get your veterinarian to give your horses a good "going over" to evaluate body condition and general health. This helps you make good decisions about adding supplements to the feed regime. Check those hooves for cracks and other issues that need attention, before winter hits.
- # Check your feed inventory now, purchase supplemental feed and don't waste feed on non-productive animals.
- # Utilize supplements to improve animal performance
- # Utilize feeding strategies to reduce wasted feed
- # Prepare for calving, foaling, lambing, kidding season. Have supplies & the veterinarian's number close at hand.
- # Push a pencil to be COST EFFECTIVE in your operation.

****AREA BEEF CONFERENCE IS IN WILKES****

This year the Area Beef Conference is planned for Monday, January 30, 2023. This year's conference will be held at the Wilkes Agricultural Center 416 Executive Dr., Wilkesboro. The program will consist of many topics designed to help you be more efficient and cut some of the input costs for your operation. Some of the speakers will be Dr. Andrew Griffith from Univ. of Tennessee, discussing Marketing Decisions to Capitalize on Premiums. Alex Tigue with Cargill discussing Heifer Development. Dr. Deidre Harmon from NC State will discuss current research efforts specifically By-Product Feeding. Bryan Blinson and others will lead various discussions. Registration starts at 3:00 PM, the program will begin at 3:30 PM and conclude with a sponsored meal. The program is free but registration is requested so adequate preparations can be made. To register, please contact the Extension Center at Davie 336-753-6100 or Yadkin 336-849-7908 or email phil_rucker@ncsu.edu. by 12:00 NOON on January 25, 2023. Please put this program on your calendar.

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 at 336/753-6100 or 336/ 849-7908, at least one week before the scheduled event.



SOUTHERN FARM SHOW

The Southern Farm Show is planned for February 1-3, 2023 at the NC State Fairgrounds in Raleigh. This will be the gathering for over 400 Ag companies with the latest and best farm equipment, supplies and services. This is a place you can compare price and quality and talk with company representatives. As a bonus, admission and parking are FREE! For more information and a schedule of events, go to www.SouthernFarmShow.com.

CATTLEMEN'S CONFERENCE FEB 24 & 25, 2023 IN HICKORY

Plans are being finalized for the 2022 NC Cattlemen's Conference. It will be held Friday and Saturday, February 24 & 25, 2023. Once again it will be held at the Hickory Convention Center. They are planning for a 2 days of education, meetings and time to fellowship with all of your cattle friends. Plans are coming together for some great educational sessions. More details are coming soon. The trade show is a great place to meet industry representatives and learn about new products. Just getting together with your cattle friends is a great way to network and share ideas. The NC Cattlemen's will send information to members. If you are not a member, no time like the present to join. To see more details for the conference go to www.nccattle.com.

ECA SOUP LUNCH IS BACK

Please join us on February 8, 2023 for the Extension and Community Association Annual Soup Day Fundraiser. Proceeds will go to the ECA Scholarship Fund for graduating seniors in Davie County who are continuing their education. You get Soup, Drink and Dessert. This will be on a Donation basis so the more you give, the more they can give to the youth in scholarships. This is a worthy cause. Please contact the Davie Extension center at 336-753-6100 for more information.

MAKE SURE YOUR LIVESTOCK DRINK WATER

Winter is here, we have experienced some bitter cold temperatures, and there is a good chance of more cold days ahead. Common sense tells us that when the temperature dips, the water sources for our livestock also experience a temperature drop. Dr. Gail Waldman at Rivendell Mobile Large Animal Hospital reminded me of the IMPORTANCE of animals consuming enough water to keep their digestive systems moving and maintain overall health. When water temperature is real low, livestock reduce consumption. Since we are feeding more hay and other fibrous bulky feed to help keep our livestock warm, adequate water consumption is PARAMOUNT to reduce the chance of this bulky feed blocking the digestive system. Horses are prone to colic this time of year if they do not consume adequate amounts of water. Be sure to monitor your livestock as much as possible to help ensure they are drinking water. Providing warm water is a great option but if that option is not available, adding a little salt to their feed and making sure they have access to salt and minerals will help increase water consumption. Adequate water consumption is such a simple way to reduce the possibility of digestive issues. Contact me, Dr. Waldman or your local veterinarian for more information.

INAUGURAL BLUERIDGE BRUTES BULL & COMMERCIAL FEMALE SALE

This inaugural sale will be held Saturday, February 25, starting at 1:00 PM. Mt. Airy Livestock Exchange, at 327 Locust Lane, Mt. Airy will serve as the sale location. For more information, contact Derek Goddard at 828-964-9349 or go to www.goddardfamilyfarms.com I have attached a document to the email with more information.

CENSUS OF AG

You may have recently received the 2022 Census of Agriculture. Response to the census is required by law under Title 7 USC 2204(g) Public Law 105-113. This same law requires that all collected information be kept confidential and can be used only for statistical purposes and only in aggregate form to prevent disclosing the identity of any producer. The census is conducted every 5 years and is a complete count of all US farms, ranches, and those who operate them. Producers can mail in their completed census form or respond online via the improved web questionnaire. For more information about the 2022 Census of Agriculture, visit www.agcensus.usda.gov or call 1-800-727-9540.

RUCKER'S REFLECTIONS

MapQuest can help you find a shortcut when driving. Computers have shortcuts to speed up whatever you are doing. BUT shortcuts are usually BAD IDEAS when working with livestock. When cattle prices are a little less than you hoped for, it's easy to purchase a less expensive herd sire (usually lower quality) to try and save money. What a disappointment you will receive when you sell those lower quality calves at a discount. When hay/feed supplies are tight and you just know that your horse, cow, sheep, goat, etc. can make it on less than necessary; don't be surprised when they lose weight, production suffers, they are more prone to illness and you have to spend quite a bit to help them recover from their setbacks. Horses can have digestive issues and even colic when their nutritive needs, especially their forage needs are not met or become out of balance.

It's always easier and cheaper to maintain, than to have to try and rebuild. Good genetics and management lead to quality calves that sell better, no matter what the market is. Healthy well fed livestock always perform better and are more cost effective in the long run. Let's all make sure we meet the challenges even if circumstances get a little tough. Call me if I can help you with some management options.

All wise men share one trait: the ability to listen.

FOXTAIL CONTROL: Foxtail has been making its presence known over the last few years and with the increasing amount of seed being dropped every year, Foxtail might be a little tougher weed to control this year. The best way to control foxtail is with a preemergent herbicide before the seeds germinate. Prowl H2O is a product now labeled for use in fescue pastures and hayfields. Prowl H2O can control a lot of weeds but for fescue pastures it does a good job on Foxtail. It will control annual weedy grasses and many broadleaf weeds. Read the label and make sure you don't kill something you want to keep. Foxtail germinates when the soil temperature warms up in the spring (usually mid April) so applying this product preferably before April 1, will help in your efforts to control. Prowl H2O needs to be rain activated within 2 days after application for best results. Results will be much less than expected without rain activation. Be sure to read and follow the label directions for all pesticides. Read the supplemental label for Prowl H2O <http://www.cdms.net/ldat/ld6CT019.pdf>

Some suggest to make 2 applications for full season control with the second application being made in late May/early June right after the first hay cutting. It is suggested to split the 4 quart per acre maximum annual load in half and apply 2 quarts to the acre in each application. The 2 quart rate should allow residual action that should last through the entire growing season. I advise you to Read the Label and contact BASF for more information or if you have additional questions.

More than likely, thick areas of foxtail have choked out other desirable grasses. So killing the foxtail could leave bare spots. When using Prowl H2O or other pendimethalin products, it takes about 10 months or so before grasses can be planted and germinate. Other weeds could try to take over those bare spots. Be prepared.

HOW ARE YOUR FEED SUPPLIES?

Winter is here and many folks are feeding hay and starting to get a handle on their winter feed supply. Keep a close watch and make plans if you might not have enough feed. Purchasing feed is one option. Sorting livestock to adjust feed and avoid overfeeding some helps reduce feed usage. Marketing low performing or livestock you really can't justify keeping is a good option as well. Contact the Extension Center if we can help you with your options.

NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS!

What can you do this year to become a better producer? Here are a few "New Year's Resolutions" you might consider.

- 1) **Simplify:** Focus on growing lots of grass and letting the livestock turn this resource into money. Discontinue unproductive activities and practices.
- 2) **DO NOT COMPLAIN:** Despite the markets, the weather and all of the variables of managing live beasts, raising livestock is a great business and hobby. Have Fun!
- 3) **Expand Your Horizons:** Join an association, subscribe to a magazine, attend a seminar, or visit other farms.
- 4) **Buy A Better Bull/Ram/Buck:** An easy way to improve profit potential is through genetics. Good livestock producers are always searching to improve with their next herd sire.
- 5) **Start A Soil-Test and Fertilization Schedule:** Machines can't operate smoothly without being lubed and tuned. The same is true for grass. You need to provide the proper lime and other nutrients for optimal growth.
- 6) **Cull the Bottom End (Again):** Lots of management time is spent caring for slackers and bottom dwellers. Ship them and profit potential can go up.
- 7) **Become A Steward Of The Land:** Stop overgrazing. Reduce access to creeks and ponds. Plant clovers, control weeds, etc., etc., etc.
- 8) **Maintain GOOD Records:** Good records answers lots of questions about your livestock operation.
- 9) **Take Care Of Yourself:** Eat right, get plenty of exercise and fresh air. Without your health, nothing else matters.
- 10) **Don't Forget Your Family or Yourself:** Make sure that your hectic schedule includes family time and not just work. Plan some R & R for yourself, remember, "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy".
- 11) **Count Your Blessings:** Livestock producers are different and special because of their daily contact with land, animals and Mother Nature. Don't take this freedom for granted.

COMMUNICATION IS VITALLY IMPORTANT

The farmer's wife texts her husband on a cold winter morning: "Windows frozen, won't open." The husband responds: "Gently pour some lukewarm water over it and gently tap edges with hammer." Wife texts back 10 minutes later: "Computer really messed up now." If better communication had been used, a different, more positive ending would have taken place. Good communication can make most, if not all situations better. The more information we have, the better decisions we can make. Listen to understand, do not listen in order to make a response. When people COMMUNICATE, not just talk, things run smoother, there are less misunderstandings and we are generally happier. Try it sometime. Make communication one of your New Year's Resolutions.