January/February 2009

NEW YEAR’S RESOLUTION FOR FORAGE MANAGEMENT

By Emily A. Walton – Livestock Agent, Onslow County

With the New Year comes the opportunity to make a fresh start with some new year’s resolutions. What better way to start off 2009 than by making an effort to improve your forage management! We all know that the cheapest way to grow great looking livestock is to also grow some great looking grass.

So after you recover from eating all of that Christmas turkey and staying up late to ring in the New Year, the next item on your list of things to do should be to pull soil samples from all of your pastures. The basis of a good forage management system begins with knowing the strengths and weaknesses of your soil. It make take just a few minutes of your time now, but the payoff later in the year will be worth your effort.

With fertilizer costs still packing a punch in the pocketbook, some producers may need to choose whether or not to fertilize certain fields. Fertilizer requirements can be reduced by utilizing legumes in your pastures. Also, be sure to make smart use of manure. Try to distribute it around the field as much as possible so that the available nutrients are spread evenly around the field. If you have to choose between lime and fertilizer, go with the lime. The pH of the soil plays a big role in the uptake of nutrients, so by ignoring your lime recommendations you could be limiting the effectiveness of your fertilizer applications.

Rotate pastures or use strip grazing to maximize the amount of forage that your livestock use within your pastures. You would be surprised how much more forage you can get out of one pasture by the use of management intensive grazing. Your goal is to keep livestock moving before they can overgraze the grass. Overgrazing is the quickest way to hurt the productivity of a pasture and it can limit the overall life of the stand. On the other hand, don’t let forage go to waste by undergrazing a pasture. If you have more than what your livestock can eat, bale the excess and put it away for the winter. The longer that excess forage stands in the field, the lower in quality it becomes.

Finally, take control over weed problems. Not only can weeds be unsightly or toxic, they compete with your grass for soil nutrients. Don’t let all of that high dollar fertilizer go towards feeding weeds. Spray for
summer annual weeds in the late spring or catch winter annual weeds in the late fall or early winter before they have the opportunity to mature and put out more seed.

A few minor changes could make major improvements to your grass. Don’t put it off another year – start now!

**PRODUCING AND SELLING SHEEP AND GOATS TO THE ETHNIC/RELIGIOUS MEAT MARKETS**

By Eve H. Honeycutt, Livestock Agent, Lenoir and Greene Counties. Adapted from an article by Susan Schoenian, Area Agent, Sheep and Goats Western Maryland Research & Education Center Maryland Cooperative Extension. Full article text available at: http://agebb.missouri.edu/mac/links/linkview3.asp?catnum=13&linknum=5498

The per capita consumption of sheep and goat meat in the United States is less than one pound per person. Americans (or immigrants) of Northern European descent traditionally do not consume much lamb or goat; however, lamb and goat hold a significant meaning in the observances of many religions and are a dietary staple in many countries. In the U.S., the largest consumers of lamb are Middle Easterners, Greeks, and Hispanics. Goat consumers include Middle Easterners, Hispanics, Asians, Africans, and Caribbean Islanders. Population demographics and immigration patterns generally favor an increase in demand for lamb and goat. Most lamb and goat is consumed on the East and West Coasts and in major metropolitan areas; however, ethnic/religious markets can be developed anywhere where ethnic populations exist (e.g. college towns, rural areas where foreign labor is utilized). The demand for sheep and goats generally increases prior to various religious observances. The type of sheep or goat (age, weight, sex, condition, etc.) and manner in which it is to be slaughtered (Halal, Kosher) depends upon the ethnic/religious group and the holiday. You should consult your local Extension agent for the most up to date list of these holidays. Muslim holidays occur 10 to 11 days earlier each year and cannot be predicted with exact certainty since they are based on a lunar calendar and the sighting of the moon. Eastern (Greek) and Western (Roman) Easter use different calendars (Julian vs. Gregorian) and rarely occur on the same date. It is also common for Muslims to consume sheep or goat meat to celebrate the birth of a new baby.

**Tapping Ethnic/Religious Markets**

There are many ways that sheep and goat producers can tap the ethnic/religious markets for their animals. Producers may direct market their sheep and goats to ethnic customers, take their animals to local or regional livestock auctions prior to holidays, sell to middlemen who supply the ethnic/religious trade(s), and/or work cooperatively with other producers to market live animals or carcasses to ethnic markets. Producers should choose a target market and produce and market lambs and goats in a manner that is consistent with the religion, beliefs, and customs of their customers, which may require changes in breeding, feeding, and management. The following tables contrast the different methods of marketing sheep and goats, with the ethnic consumer in mind.

**Marketing at a Public Livestock Auction**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Convenient</td>
<td>Price is not known in advance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular sales (weekly, bi-weekly, etc.)</td>
<td>No control over price - &quot;price-taker&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requires minimal effort</td>
<td>Wide fluctuations in price</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sell based on a &quot;certified&quot; weight</td>
<td>Must pay sales commission, yardage, and other fees (up to $5/head)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prompt payment</td>
<td>Transportation costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guaranteed payment</td>
<td>Goats may be sold on a per-head basis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Method of price discovery</strong></td>
<td>Stressful to livestock</td>
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The easiest way to market sheep and/or goats is to take them to a local or regional livestock auction. Producers can take
advantage of the ethnic/religious demand for lamb and goat when they sell to livestock auction markets, if they produce the type of animal(s) that the ethnic buyers want and sell their livestock prior to the religious observances in which lamb and goat is commonly consumed. Many auction barns offer "special sales" of lambs and kids prior to Easter, Christmas, and the major Muslim holidays.

To maximize returns from public livestock auctions, a producer should develop a working relationship with the market manager. To start with, let him know when you are bringing a load of lambs or goats to market. Ask the market manager what kind of sheep or goats his buyers prefer and when the best time to sell is. You can also use public livestock auctions to make contact with livestock buyers and to negotiate direct sales to packers and other middlemen. Producers should compare livestock auction markets and choose the markets that will return the most profit. Auction prices are listed in newspapers, farm periodicals, and on the Internet. When comparing the prices from livestock markets, it is important to compare "net" proceeds, rather than "gross" reported prices. The auction that brings the highest prices may not result in the most profit if the higher prices are negated by higher transportation costs, shrink, sales commissions, etc. The difference in prices between auction markets should reflect regional differences in transportation costs. Prices should be higher at the markets which are closest to the point of slaughter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You set/negotiate price with buyer</td>
<td>Time consuming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum price potential</td>
<td>Cultural differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sell by the pound or head</td>
<td>Customers like to bargain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash sales</td>
<td>Possible language barrier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No transportation costs</td>
<td>Loss of privacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No sales commission, yardage or other fees</td>
<td>Buyers may need place to slaughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repeat customers</td>
<td>May be stressful to producer, family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less stress to livestock</td>
<td>On-farm slaughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Facility&quot; for slaughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Need to dispose of offal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Need for discretion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Legalsities</td>
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Because you are eliminating all of the middlemen, the best prices are usually obtained when sheep and goats are sold directly from the farm to the consumer. Under this scenario, the buyer may take the live animal with him, have the lamb/goat slaughtered at a custom or USDA processing plant, or process the lamb/goat on the producer's farm.

**On-farm slaughter**

It is illegal to slaughter a sheep or goat on the farm for the purpose of sale. Sheep and goat meat may only be sold if the animal has been processed in a USDA inspected slaughter plant. Some states have state meat inspection which allows the sale of state-inspected meat within the state. However, there is an exemption in federal laws which allows on-farm slaughter of livestock for personal consumption.

When selling livestock for slaughter, you need to sell a LIVE animal and let the buyer process the animal himself or facilitate the slaughter of the animal at a custom or USDA.
slaughterhouse. You must not help the buyer process the animal; however, you have an obligation to ensure that the animal is handled and killed in a humane manner (livestock should not be hung until they are insensible) and that offal is disposed of in an environmentally sound manner (e.g. composting). Cornell University has published a poster depicting humane on-farm slaughter. Producers should familiarize themselves with local, state, and federal laws before allowing on-farm slaughter of sheep and goats.

Before you sell livestock directly from your farm, you have to find customers and develop a client base. Some of the ways, you can develop an ethnic client base are:

- Word of Mouth
- Place a classified ad in a large metropolitan newspaper
- Post flyers at religious and social centers prior to a major holidays
- Send articles to magazines, newsletters, TV, and radio stations that represents specific ethnic groups.
- Advertise on college campuses that have large foreign populations.
- Leave your business card or brochure at a custom or USDA slaughterhouse.
- Hand out free samples at a farmer's market.

Got beef? This might just be the new slogan for 2009! Duplin County Livestock Agent Brandon Cox and predecessor Chip Carothers have assisted Duplin County cattle producers in forming the Eastern Carolina Cattlemen’s Alliance. The alliance will strive to provide quality, pre-conditioned cattle marketed in truckload lots in order to maximize the economical well being of local cattle producers.

**What does this mean for you?** It means now is the time for all good farmers/cattlemen to work together with their friends and neighbors to group their cattle into “like” loads in efforts to put a few more dollars in their pockets. The Eastern Carolina Cattlemen’s Alliance (ECCA) has developed a recommended calf health management protocol.

**ECCA Minimum Recommended Calf Health Management Protocol:**

Each participating member must be Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) Certified. BQA guidelines must be followed and processing map included with the cattle:

- 3rd party certification required, certification is available by any BQA trainer
- Cattle must be dewormed no more than 60 days prior to sale
- Calves must be PI tested for BVD and results must test negative
- Calves must be on a mineral supplement program.

**Suggested:**

Calves should be aged and source verified as outlined by USDA for export. There are two (2) recommended 90-day breeding seasons:

1. First Breeding Season: June, July and August (born March, April, and May)
2. Second Breeding Season: December, January and February (born September, October and November).

**The following vaccinations are required:**

- Calves must receive 2 doses (initial shot and booster shot) of Modified Live Vaccine (MVL) no more than 42 days apart.
- Vaccinated and booster shot administered (following manufacturer recommendations) for IBR, BVD Type 1 & 2, BRSV, & PI3.
- Vaccinated for Clostridial (7 or 8 way) disease (following manufacturer’s recommendation).
- Vaccinated for Pasteurella (haemolytic-multocida).
Will my calves fit in?

ECCA General Calf Description:
- Calves must be weaned a minimum of 45 days
- Calves must be eating from a bunk (not from self-feeders/creep feeders)
- Calves must be castrated and healed (Guarantee no “stags”)
- All calves must show no visible horns/or be healed following dehorning
- Heifers guaranteed open (Heifers may be examined for pregnancy at buyer’s expenses. Any heifer found to be pregnant will be removed from the allotted group and returned to the seller).

Still don’t think your calves will fit?
In addition to minimum health requirements and calf description listed, ECCA will strive to put together “like” loads of cattle. Loads of “like” cattle will be grouped by vaccination programs (i.e. Fort Dodge, Pfizer, BI, Novartis, etc); color of animal; weight of animal; size of animal; and age of animal. Each producer will be responsible for appropriate calf records, i.e. birth date, tag number, processing map, etc.

Brahman influenced and pink nosed cattle will not be excluded from the alliance, but greater effort will be put forth in placing them in “like” loads. Calves will be graded by consignee/marketer of cattle or by a NCDA grader.

For more information, contact your local livestock agent or Duplin County Livestock Agent Brandon Cox 910-296-2143, brandon_cox@ncsu.edu.

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**PERFORMANCE LIVESTOCK AND FEED COMPANY BULL BUYERS PROGRAM**

*By Amy Andrews-Livestock Agent, Craven & Jones Counties*

Performance Livestock and Feed Company is a family owned operation. For the last ten years we have been using wet corn gluten purchased from Performance in the balanced ration used at the Butner Bull Test Station. The bulls’ performance has been excellent on the ration used and it has cut the feed costs.

Along with selling feed Performance Livestock and Feed Company also is in the cattle business. Since they are involved in several aspects of the cattle business they realize the importance of proven genetics in your cow herd. If everyone used proven genetics in their herd it would improve the overall quality of the product and be beneficial to all aspects of the cattle business.

With this thought in mind Performance Livestock and Feed Company is again going to give one lucky producer up to a $2000 credit on a bull purchased at the Butner Bull Sale January 10, 2009. To become eligible for this credit the producer must have a description of the beef cattle operation and have it submitted by the county extension livestock agent. This should include information about herd health program, nutrition, and marketing goals and have at least 20 head of beef cattle. The must have also not purchased a performance tested bull from a BCIP central bull test sale (Butner, Waynesville or Forage) in the past ten years. A committee from the Beef Cattle Improvement Program will review the submissions and select a producer to receive the credit.

The producer that is selected to receive the credit will get up to $2000 to go toward the purchase of one bull. If the bull is goes for more than $2000 the producer is responsible for the difference. The producer agrees to use the bull for three years and at the end of this period the producer can either purchase the bull at salvage value or sell the bull and Performance Livestock and Feeds Company receives the money.

The BCIP committee would like to thank Mark and Jason Pendleton of Performance Livestock and Feed Company for supporting the BCIP bull testing program through their bull purchasing program.

To receive more information you can contact Gary Gregory at 919.515.4027 or Gary_Gregory@ncsu.edu.
We all know what the options are for animal mortality disposal on swine and poultry farms; burial, incineration, rendering, and the newest or historically least used method to North Carolina farmers – composting. There are a few different types of on-farm composting methods to choose from. The static composter is either a bin or a windrow type set-up on a concrete pad. The forced air composter is very similar to a static, with the addition of air being forced through the compost material. Finally, there is an enclosed, rotary drum composting method. Each of these methods share some advantages to other mortality management options.

Composting in general is an all natural, environmentally sound method of mortality management which minimizes water and air pollution by containing nutrients, pathogens and odors. Microorganisms work to breakdown the material when given the right ingredients and environment. Composting has other advantages, including disease prevention and biosecurity through a self-contained, on site system. By combining the right amount of animal material, a carbon source (this can be shavings, sawdust, straw, recycled poultry bedding, etc), moisture (50-60%), temperature (100-150 degrees F), and porosity (35-50%), the composting process works. Achieving a temperature above 130 and up to 150 degrees F will destroy disease pathogens while allowing good bacteria to survive and continue breaking down the material. Any method of composting can be successful at achieving these parameters, although some may take longer than others.

Recently I had the opportunity to visit a swine farm in Sampson County with a rotary drum composter and wanted to share what I learned with you. The farm is composting their mortality in a stainless steel, enclosed container, called the Biovator™. This stainless steel, four foot diameter, tube-shaped composter successfully converts animal carcasses into compost within fourteen days. The Biovator™ and other rotary drum composters offer additional advantages to traditional methods, by being totally enclosed with even less chance for leaching and odor of the material, more efficient at material breakdown, and using less added material for carbon, such as shavings or sawdust. Other choices of the rotary drum composter also exist, including the ecodrum™. The ecodrum™ is very similar to the Biovator™ with differences in the container construction and sizing options. These rotary drum composting methods can handle all mortalities from your farm, with a variety of sizes and lengths to choose from depending on the size and type of farm, as well as the farm’s average mortality.

One other interesting advantage to composting is that cost share can be obtained either through the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) or the state agricultural cost share program. Up to 75% of the average cost to install any composting method can be awarded. For more information on receiving cost share for an on-farm composter, visit your local NRCS or Soil and Water Conservation District office. For more information on the rotary drum composters, you can visit the Biovator™ website at www.puratone.com or the ecodrum™ website at www.ecodrumcomposter.com. As you continue to seek ways to improve your operations and become more efficient, composting may be of interest to you.

Forage Management Tips

**January**

- If winter pasture is limited, feed hay in the pasture or allow cows to graze every other day. The priority for limiting pasture is (1) calves by creep grazing, (2) stockers, (3) nursing cows, and (4) dry cows.
- Keep animals off newly planted winter annuals during wet periods to prevent...
damage. Allow calves first priority to graze.

• Sample hay bales which are stored outside that will be fed during the next four to eight weeks.
• Decide which fields will be re-seeded or overseeded during late winter and early spring; obtain soil test and supplies for planting.
• Lime may be applied during this off-season.
• Keep a record of winter weed problems so that control measures can be taken next fall. This is the latest month that some herbicides may be used on legumes.
• Determine animal feed requirements for the year (about 6 tons of hay equivalent/cow-calf pair) and outline a 12-month forage production and use plan to meet the needs.

February

• Apply nitrogen to cool-season grasses to stimulate early spring growth.
• Overseed legumes, such as ladino clover, into well-grazed (2 inches or less) grass pastures.
• Lime fields for spring plantings.
• Divide pastures to improve the quality and persistence of pasture plants.
• Locate sources of hybrid bermudagrass sprigs for planting.
• Burn warm-season grass residues in late February.
• Get herbicide sprayers ready to control weeds in dormant bermudagrass fields.

Upcoming Events

JANUARY

13th - Forage Based Finishing, Direct Marketed Beef at Mount Olive College, Mount Olive, NC. To register call Krystal Faison, Administrative Assistant at the Agribusiness Center at 919-658-7510.

22nd - Beef Marketing Meeting (topics to include, herd health, genetics, and new marketing opportunities) Location: Jones County Civic Center, for more information or to register call Amy Andrews 252-633-1477 or Emily Adams 910-455-5873

27th - Forage and Grasslands Council "Managing Input" Duplin County Extension Office contact Wanda Hargrove 910-296-2143

FEBRUARY

4th – 6th – Southern Farm Show – State Fairgrounds, Raleigh

20th – 22nd – Perry & Doris Teeter 4-H Beef Leadership Institute – Hickory, NC

20th – 22nd – NC Cattlemen’s Conference – Hickory, NC

This site contains the same information found in the guide and has been produced to offer assistance in dealing with natural disasters. If you would like a printed copy of the guide, contact your local North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service Center.

Sincerely,

Emily A. Walton
Agricultural Extension Agent

"HELPING PEOPLE PUT KNOWLEDGE TO WORK"
Onslow County Master Gardener Volunteer Program

The Master Gardener Volunteer Program is a joint endeavor of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service and volunteers who wish to learn how to be better gardeners and help other gardeners by sharing their knowledge. The program is designed to recruit and train volunteers to help meet the educational needs of the citizens of Onslow County.

The term ‘gardening’ is used in a broad sense. It includes, vegetables, fruits, lawn grasses, shrubs, flowers and trees. The training focuses on developing diagnostic skills for insects and diseases of plants. Classes are also given on landscaping for water quality, soils, composting, propagation, wildlife control and much, much more!

As a Master Gardener, you will receive 40 hours of intensive horticultural training.

After graduation you will be expected to provide an equivalent amount of volunteer work in the community. Examples of the types of activities that you can choose to perform are: answering homeowner inquiries at the Extension Office; mailing out information bulletins to homeowners, conducting plant clinics, working with elementary school children on special horticultural projects, talking to Garden Clubs, advising on community beautification projects and writing newsletter articles.

The volunteer work is fun and interesting, and you will not be required to do anything with which you are not comfortable. Master Gardeners make ‘friends for life’ and enjoy working and learning together.

The 2009 Master Gardener course will begin February 17th and end April 9th. Classes normally will be taught Tuesday and Thursday mornings from 9:00 – Noon. Cost for the course is $75.00 which includes a comprehensive Master Gardener Manual that you keep.

If you would be interested in receiving an application for the 2009 course, please call the North Carolina Cooperative Extension – Onslow County Center at (910) 455-5873, and leave your name, address and phone number. Enrollment will be limited, so inquire early.