This is a reminder that as of July 2008, the NRCS Standard 359 (Waste Treatment Lagoon) was modified with regard to sludge management. Prior to the change, the requirement was that the measured treatment volume below stop pump must have a minimum of four (4) feet of depth free of sludge at all times. The revised standard does not use the 4-foot depth requirement.

Sludge compliance is now based on sludge volume as a percentage of the total treatment volume. Sludge accumulation in the permanent treatment zone must be less than 50% of the planned treatment volume. Also, there must be a minimum of 2.5 feet of liquid above the sludge at the pump intake location. If either of these conditions is not met, then sludge must be removed or managed in accordance with an approved Plan of Action for Lagoon Sludge Reduction (POA). A new sludge survey worksheet has been developed to calculate sludge and treatment volumes to determine compliance.

Producers who were out of compliance on the basis of the previous 359 standard and are now in compliance should submit both sludge survey worksheets, OLD and NEW, to DWQ. DWQ staff will review the information and notify the producer of their decision with regard to compliance.

Copies of the revised Waste Treatment Lagoon Standard and sludge survey worksheets can be obtained from your local Extension Office. Now is a good time to contact your local Extension Agent and get new copies to use on your next sludge survey. It may be to your advantage!

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Why do goats get calculi or urinary stones? Part of the reason is goat anatomy. Male goats (most often wethers but sometimes also bucks) have problems with stones because their urethra (the tube that empties into the bladder) may not grow completely in diameter before castration. Delaying castration until the buck is sexually mature (four to eight months of age) will help reduce this problem, but stones can also affect intact bucks and does.

Another reason goats get stones is due to a calcium:phosphorous (Ca:P) imbalance in the diet, often caused or influenced by high
grain diets, or diets high in certain types of forages. To combat this, it’s best to minimize concentrates (grain) in the diet and provide plenty of forages, either by grazing, hay, or a combination of the two. Having plenty of clean water available is also critical, and supplementing salt in the diet will encourage water intake. A balanced diet with a Ca:P ratio of 2:1 to 4:1 will minimize stone formation, and supplemental calcium can be offered through feed grade limestone. When formulating your herd’s diet, make sure to determine the Ca and P concentration of the entire diet, including forages, not just the concentrate portion. Finally, excess urinary tract cells associated with urinary tract infections and Vitamin A deficiencies can cause urinary calculi. Supplemental Vitamin A can help if this is the problem.

Many goat feeds are formulated with added ammonium chloride, which helps to acidify the urine and reduce crystallization and stone development. Feeding ammonium chloride at .5-1% of the total ration, or at 2% of the concentrate portion of the ration will help. Another option is to administer ammonium chloride at a dose of 10 grams/head/day. In addition, gradually increasing the salt levels to 5-10% of the ration will help minimize urinary calculi.

Information for this article was compiled from the National Extension Goat Handbook, the Goat Medicine Handbook by Mary Smith, and Nutrition, Feeding Managing of Meat Goats by Jean-Marie Luginbuhl and Matt Poore, NCSU, and Bladder Stones in the Goat brochure by Dana Lewis, DVM, NCSU.

What Does MCOOL Mean for Beef Producers?

Submitted by: Eve H. Honeycutt, Livestock Agent, Lenoir and Greene Counties.

If you are a beef producer, chances are you have probably heard of MCOOL that will be affecting the industry. MCOOL stands for Mandatory Country Of Origin Labeling. If you are an observant shopper, chances are you have noticed some changes in your local grocery store.

MCOOL legislation is basically a marketing gimmick aimed to provide consumers with origin information on meat and produce. This label law states that all meat and produce must be clearly labeled with the country that the product was produced in. On October 1, 2008, this law came into effect, although you could have seen some labels out before that.

MCOOL is not intended to be a food safety tool, only a marketing guarantee from the government that all consumers should know where their food comes from.

So how does this affect you as a beef producer? When you sell your cattle at the local stockyard, you must sign an affidavit verifying your cattle were produced in the United States. If you sell cattle off your farm to another individual, or you sell meat off your farm from your animals, you must also provide this signed affidavit to your customer. The affidavit is available on the NC Cattlemen’s website at www.nccattle.com or you can ask your local Extension office for help finding it.

You must also keep records on animals you sell to verify their country of origin should it come into question. I went to the MCOOL website (www.countryoforiginlabel.org) and found the following information on Recordkeeping for this legislation:

Any person engaged in the business of supplying a covered commodity to a retailer, directly or indirectly, must maintain records to establish and identify the immediate previous source (if applicable) and immediate subsequent recipient of the product. Such records must identify the product unique to that transaction by means of a lot number or other unique identifier, for a period of one (1) year from the date of the transaction.

Establishments that slaughter livestock are considered initiating suppliers of a covered commodity. The Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), the agency that will administer the law, has indicated that the initiating supplier (packer) either must have the records in its possession or have access to records of the livestock supplier that substantiate the country of origin of the meat product at issue.

At retail, records and other documentary evidence relied upon at the point
of sale to establish a product's country(ies) of origin must be available during normal business hours to USDA representatives for so long as the product is on hand. For pre-labeled products, the label itself is sufficient evidence on which the retailer may rely to establish a product's origin.

Below are some Frequently Asked Questions- and their answers- from the COOL website that should help you understand the law a little better:

**Will country-of-origin labels raise the cost of meat?**
USDA estimated the cost to implement mandatory country-of-origin labeling in the first year alone will be about $2.5 billion. Given the costs associated with record-keeping and the necessary segregation of livestock and meat in plants based on their origin that will be critical in ensuring label accuracy, that number could be too low. How these costs will be spread across meat products and how much prices will rise is yet to be determined.

**How do these labels benefit consumers?**
Congress has determined that country-of-origin labels are important to consumers. Whether consumers will pay more and if so how much more they will pay at a time when prices are hitting record levels due to spiking livestock feed prices remains in question.

**Don't these labels already exist?**
Currently, finished products in consumer packaging that are imported from other countries, such as Danish hams or Canadian pork loins, for example, say "Product of Denmark" or "Product of Canada." Before September 30, 2008, if meat was processed in the U.S., it was considered a U.S. product and no labeling was required detailing its geographic history.

**Why doesn't this labeling rule apply to foodservice or processed meat products?**
Congress determined that products intended for foodservice and processed meat products should be exempt from the law.

**How much meat is imported from Mexico?**
Very little. However, many young cattle are imported from Mexico and are subsequently raised and processed in the U.S. If you see a beef product bearing the label "Product of U.S. and Mexico," that label reflects the fact that the animal was born in Mexico, but raised from an early age in the U.S. and then processed.

**Are imported meat products as safe as U.S. products?**
Exporting meat products to the U.S. is not easy because the U.S. government requires that these products meet the same high standards as U.S. products. To be eligible to export to the U.S., a foreign country's inspection system has to be found by USDA to be equivalent to the U.S. system. In addition, meat plants in other countries that wish to export must document that they are following U.S. food safety standards or standards that are equivalent to U.S. standards. These plants must be certified by the USDA. When the meat products arrive at the U.S. border, they are subject to more safety inspections. Finally, if the imported meat is further processed in the U.S., it is subject again to the inspection requirements administered by USDA.

Only a limited number of plants within a limited number of nations meet these tough standards. U.S. meat companies wouldn't buy these products, use them in production, and apply the U.S. company label if they weren't confident in the imported product's safety.

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**Reduce Input Costs By Soil Testing**
*Emily Adams Walton, Livestock Agent – Onslow County*

Anyone who has purchased fertilizer recently has seen how expensive it has become and has experienced the burden that it can place on the input costs of any farm operation. Because of the expense, it's even more important to be sure that fertilizer is being applied correctly to the soil or you might as well be flushing your dollar bills down the toilet.

The results of a soil test can give you a
snapshot of the nutrient needs of a particular
field. By applying nutrients to the soil based
on the recommendations of the soil test report,
you can be sure that your soil is receiving just
what it needs. There will be no nutrients (or
dollars!) wasted because of excessive
fertilization. Not only is this a financial bonus,
it is great for the environment too. Excessive
nutrients in the soil that are not taken up by
crops are more likely to run off or leach into
water sources which can degrade water
quality. On the other hand, by applying just
the right amount of nutrients to the soil, there
is a lesser chance of lost yield (or dollars!) due
to a nutrient deficiency in the soil that may
ultimately affect crop performance.

While all nutrients such as potassium,
phosphorous, magnesium or calcium are
critical to crop growth, one of the most
important and often forgotten aspects of soil
fertility is the pH of the soil. Soil pH can
affect the transfer and availability of nutrients
in the soil. Even if there is an adequate level
of certain nutrients in the soil after your
fertilizer applications, the wrong pH level can
keep these nutrients from being available to
the crop roots. The effectiveness of certain
herbicides can also be altered by an incorrect
soil pH. So if soil can be thought of as the
“gateway” between crops and nutrients, then
soil pH is most definitely the “gatekeeper”.
Follow the lime recommendations on your soil
test report to keep the gatekeeper happy.

For pastures, the use of legumes can
serve as another source of savings on fertilizer
costs. Clover, lespedeza, and other legumes
fix nitrogen from the atmosphere and add it
back into the soil, therefore reducing the total
amount of nitrogen that needs to be applied to
that field. For more information about soil
testing or reducing on-farm costs, contact your
local Extension office.

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Emily Adams Walton, Livestock Agent – Onslow County

The county owned grain drill that has been coordinated by the Onslow Extension office in past years is no longer available for rental. We apologize for the inconvenience to those who routinely used this piece of equipment. The costs of repairing and maintaining the grain drill were far outweighing the revenues generated by renting it, so the county has chosen to surplus the equipment. The grain drill will be up for auction on the online website of www.govdeals.com. Anyone wishing to bid on the grain drill can visit this website and enter your bid. If you do not have internet access or would like assistance in placing a bid, please contact Melissa Evans or Emily Adams Walton at the Onslow Extension office. The grain drill is available for viewing at Shaw Farm Supply in Richlands.

**Forage Management Tips**

### November

- To improve feeding efficiency, test forages before winter feeding begins.
- As winter feeding begins, separate the herd into lactating and dry cows so the best quality pastures and hay can be fed to the cows with nursing calves.
- Do not graze fall-planted perennial pastures, such as tall fescue/ladino clover, until growth reaches 6 to 8 inches.
- Winter annual pastures that were planted early (September) may be responsive to an additional application of nitrogen (30 to 50 lbs per acre).
- Bermudagrass should have 3 to 4 inches of growth to serve as an insulation against winter damage.

### December

- Ovoid overgrazing by feeding hay on pasture or restricting acres available to animals.
- Feed hay stored outside before using hay that is stored inside.
**NOVEMBER**

20th - Southeast Regional Pork Conference, Wayne County Extension Office, call 919-731-1520

**DECEMBER**

8th - Last Chance Animal Waste Credits (6 Hours) – 9-4 pm Onslow Extension Office.

**SPOTLIGHT**

**CHRISTMAS CHEER TIME IS HERE AGAIN**

Onslow County 4-H County Council is again participating in the Elder Cheer Program. Since 1996 the Onslow County Adult and Family Services unit at the Department of Social Services has coordinated the Elder cheer program. This program places an emphasis on elderly and disabled population who are in resident care facilities, while giving our community the opportunity to share their holiday spirit.

On December 9th, join us at 6:00 pm for refreshments and at 6:30 pm the social gathering and assembling of items. Please plan on attending and completing a wonderful community service project.

In the meantime, please tell everyone you know that we are collecting the following items. All of these can be dropped off at the Cooperative Extension, 4024 Richlands Hwy. Please remind our staff that they are for the Elder Cheer Holiday Program. Items requested by Onslow County Elder Cheer are: lotion, candy (diabetic), aftershave, fruit baskets, socks, cassette tapes, key chains, watches, blankets, deodorant, electric blankets, combs, perfume, slippers, hair brushes, night gowns, batteries, gospel tapes, holiday novelties, toothbrushes, writing paper, stationery, support hose, powder, pajamas, disposable razors, personal care items (soap, shampoo, etc.), small flashlights, fashion jewelry, live plants, pens, window mounted bird feeders.

County Council is also in need of baskets, tins and gift bags to help wrap these items. **All of these items are due in the 4-H office by December 5th.** For more information, contact Wanda Mills, 455-5873.

Sincerely,

Emily Walton
Agricultural Extension Agent

“HELPING PEOPLE PUT KNOWLEDGE TO WORK”