February/March 2008

Equine Programming Survey

Your last HorseBits newsletter included a survey to help us determine how to improve the equine programming offered by the Onslow Extension office. If you haven’t yet filled out one of these surveys, please do so at your earliest convenience and return it to the Extension office. Responses can also be submitted via email to emily_adams@ncsu.edu. Your input is valuable and we appreciate you taking the time to share your thoughts and suggestions. Thank you.

Forage Planning for Drought Survival

The last 6 months of 2007 were a challenge to our livestock and horse owners as the drought put a stretch on hay supplies everywhere. We have no way of knowing what the weather has in store for 2008. We hope that the New Year will bring much needed rainfall to help ease our current conditions.

In the meantime, horse owners need to plan ahead for the spring growing season. Many of our perennial warm season pastures were severely damaged last year by the lack of rainfall and overgrazing of livestock and horses. It’s possible that the root systems of the grasses were damaged enough that the pastures will be unable to recover. The warm season grasses we hope to rely on this spring and summer for additional forages may produce only weak stands. If there is sufficient moisture, grasses may need to be reseeded this spring to help renovate damaged pastures. There may be an increase in weed pressure due to weak stands of grass or the presence of weed seeds that were transported in hay from other areas.

If we don’t receive the rainfall we need, feeding hay or other alternative feeds will remain our only option. Try to plan ahead to ensure that you will have enough hay to sustain your horses. Much of the horse quality hay is being trucked in from out of state at this point. There is very little hay of any type available in North Carolina.

The State of North Carolina has authorized the use of up to $3.5 million to
purchase and transport hay into the state that will be made available to livestock and horse owners. This hay will be sold at the same price that the state paid to purchase and transport the hay. Hay shipments are already being delivered and are arriving at NCDA research farms across the state. Our nearest drop-off location is at the Caswell Research Farm in Kinston. Buyers are currently limited to 4 large bales of hay or 20 small bales of hay in order to serve as many people as possible but limits may change based on supply and demand. Please note that an NC Farm ID premise identification number is required for individuals to purchase hay. The registration form to receive this number can be brought to the research farm and dropped off when hay is bought in order to start the registration process. Contact NCDA or your local NC Cooperative Extension office for more information.

If you are interested in buying any of the hay available through the Emergency Hay Program, call NCDA’s toll-free Hay Alert Hotline at 1-866-506-6222 or contact the NCDA Caswell Research Farm directly at 252-208-3360.

| How Much Hay Do You Need? |

Are you still wondering if you have enough hay on hand for the winter? Here’s a quick example to help you figure out how to do that. Keep in mind that on average, a mature horse needs to eat about 2% of its body weight each day on a “dry matter basis” to meet its nutrient requirements.

When using hay terminology, “dry matter” is the measurement used to determine how much of the weight of the hay is actually moisture. Since most hay is about 12-15% moisture, we’ll factor that into our hay requirements when determining how many pounds of hay we need.

For this example, assume that we have one horse, Petey, who weighs 1000 lbs. (You can estimate your horse’s weight by using a weight tape from your local feed store.) We need to feed Petey hay for 6 months. Petey is only eating 1.5% of his body weight in hay because the remainder of his diet is from a concentrate (sweet feed or pellets).

A 1000 lb. horse eating 1.5% of his body weight will eat about 15 lbs on a dry matter basis each day. If our hay is 85% dry matter and we factor in the weight of the water (divide 15lbs of hay by .85 dry matter), we get roughly 17 lbs of hay. This means that we need to plan on feeding Petey about 17lbs of hay to actually get the 15lbs of dry matter. Remember, the actual amount we feed is more than the required dry matter amount because of the added weight of the moisture in the hay.

Assuming there are 30 days in a month and we’re feeding for 6 months, we feed hay for 180 days. To feed Petey 17lbs of hay for 180 days, we need 3,060 lbs of hay. There are 2,000 lbs in a ton so we will need about 1.5 tons of hay.

Keep in mind several things though. Having access to pasture will reduce the amount of hay that needs to be fed. You can also reduce the amount of hay in the daily ration by increasing the amount of concentrate. For horses, never feed less than 1% of the horses body weight in forage. This means a 1,000lb horse should eat a minimum of 10lbs of forage each day, which includes hay and pasture. Lastly, buy a little more hay than you think you’ll need. Some hay will be wasted and you might lose a few bales to poor storage. With our current hay situation, it’s better to have a few more bales on hand than you actually need than to get in a situation where you need a few more bales and you don’t have them!
Secure Your Hay!

With the current hay situation, hay thefts are on the rise. Please keep a close watch on your hay supply. If possible, lock all hay storage areas and ask neighbors to keep an eye out for suspicious activity.

Calendar of Events:

February

2nd - 3rd - NCSU Open Horse Show
   Judges’ Certification Clinic – Hunt Horse Complex, Raleigh

9th – SE District 4H Horse Bowl –
   Onslow Extension office
   (Contact Onslow Extension office
   (910) 455-5873)

16th – Horse Health Day and Equine
   Consignment Sale – Shingleton
   Farms, Hampstead
   (Contact Onslow Extension office (910)
   455-5873)

23rd - College of Veterinary Medicine
   Horseowner’s Symposium – Raleigh
   (Contact: http://www.equinemedicinesymposium.com)

March

1st – Raleigh Spring Horse Sale – Hunt
   Horse Complex, Raleigh

8th – College of Veterinary Medicine
   Horseman Youth Day – Raleigh
   (Contact: http://clubs.ncsu.edu/equine/HYD.html)

14th - 15th - NCSU Equine Hoof Care and
   Shoeing Short Course - Raleigh

15th – Eastern NC Regional Horse
   Festival and Equine Consignment
   Sale – Goldsboro
   (Contact Eileen Coite (919) 731-1520)

If you have an event that you’d like to post on our April/May calendar events, contact Emily at (910) 455-5873 or emily_adams@ncsu.edu by March 15.

Thanks,

Emily Adams
Extension Agent
Livestock
**SPOTLIGHT**

**NCOWCICB: What is it?**

During the summer of 2006, the NC legislature passed a law requiring that anyone who installed, repaired, or inspected a septic system be state certified. The law went into effect on January 1, 2008. NCOWCICB stands for “North Carolina Onsite Wastewater Contractor & Inspector Certification Board”. The Board consists of nine appointed members who represent different aspects of the industry: installers, Environmental Health, realtors, home builders, NC Cooperative Extension, etc. Three of the Board members live in eastern North Carolina: Mr. Al Gerard (certified water treatment facility operator), Mr. Russ Davis (NC Home Builders Association), and Dr. Diana Rashash (NC Cooperative Extension Service). Information about the statute, about the Board and its members, and other information is located at: www.ncowcicb.info

If you are having any work done on your septic system, make sure the person doing the work has the proper certification. This legislation was passed to help increase consumer confidence in septic systems, ensure that high-quality septic system installations and repairs are available, and to hold septic system professionals responsible for their work. This legislation will not, however, remove or reduce the importance of an informed homeowner. Septic systems do require maintenance. One of the simplest practices is to not add anything to the system that may harm it. This includes harsh chemicals, large amounts of disinfectants, grease, and solids (bones, eggshells, cigarette filters, etc.). It is also recommended to have the septic tank pumped every 3-5 years, depending upon homeowner practices. The use of “additives” is NOT an alternative to having the tank pumped.

The NC Cooperative Extension Service has several publications to help homeowners learn about their system: *Septic Systems & Their Maintenance*, *Septic System Owners Guide*, and *Investigate Before You Invest*. It is also recommended that homeowners obtain a copy of their septic system permit from their county health department.

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Natural Resources-Environmental Education