Sheep & Goat News

May 2008

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Be sure to visit
The McDowell Cooperative Extension Commercial Agriculture Web page
http://mcdowell.ces.ncsu.edu for complete information on:

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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<td>July 2</td>
<td>Wool Pool</td>
<td>Albemarle, NC – AM</td>
<td>Steve Lemons-(704)983-3987</td>
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<td>July 2</td>
<td>Wool Pool</td>
<td>Asheville, NC – PM</td>
<td>Jeff Bradley (828) 255-5522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 3</td>
<td>Wool Pool</td>
<td>Sparta, NC – 8-11 AM</td>
<td>Charles Young (336) 846-5850</td>
</tr>
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<td>August 2</td>
<td>McDowell Jr. Livestock Show</td>
<td>Marion, NC</td>
<td>Mario DeLuca (828)652-7874</td>
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At the annual meeting of the Mid-States Wool Cooperative we saw several of the problems that limit our ability to market wool in North Carolina and Virginia. All of these problems are easy to solve by the producer, yet they continue to plague the wool industry.

- **Poly contamination** is one of the biggest problems. Little pieces of plastic, either from plastic baling twine or from the “blue tarps” is a major problem. As little as 2 oz. of poly fiber can contaminate 40,000 lbs of wool. It cannot be washed out or carded out and will cause defects in both the dying process and the weaving. If you feed hay, especially small square bales, tied with poly, your wool will be contaminated. The only way to avoid this is to use sisal twine. When the blue tarps are exposed to weather or wind, they shred with the poly getting in the wool. Use a higher quality tarp around sheep and for covering hay.

- **Black wool** has always been a problem in the commercial market. With the current emphasis on club type lambs, a lot of wool has non-white fibers. Just keep it all separated.

- **Hair sheep** are growing in popularity, with some good reasons. However, the crosses often have hair mixed with the wool. The processors call this “kempy wool”. The kemp is hair, not wool. It dyes differently and it really itches. If you bag kempy or black wool with clean wool, the fleece on either side becomes contaminated, with a lesser value.

- If wool is sheared damp and then bagged, it can turn yellow or can actually mold. Either way it is reject wool and has very few uses and a low price. One problem is wool can contain 18-20% moisture and still feel dry, so the sheep need to be really dry before you shear. Remember, the wool may stay in the bag for several months, so get it right the first time.

- Remember that good wool handling practices will enable us to keep selling our wool.

- Keep black and colored wool separate. This means if you have a flock that has both white faced and black faced sheep, keep the wool separate. If you have dark colored sheep, keep that wool separate. That will help Mid-States to get the best price for the best use of the wool. You can pack the wool in the same bag if you don’t have enough of one kind to fill a bag, but put something between the types, like a paper feed sack or piece of cardboard.

- Remove tags, the manure is not wool, and can cause the mold and reject problems.

- Make sure each bag is labeled with producers name and address. We do not repack any wool, so the bags it comes in should be able to handle shipping to Ohio. I don't accept tags at the Sparta pool, the price does not justify it. Black and colored wool counts for the LDPs, so I would weigh and record, even if it may be low or no price.

- We sell wool on a grade and yield basis, so the way you package your wool will determine what price you can receive. If you bag everything together, the price will be that of the lowest grade. If you can separate the different types and keep out the foreign material, you can get what the wool is worth. It is really up to you.

I would also remind you of the USDA price support program for wool, in the form of loans and LDPs. Details of the program and rates can be found at: [http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA)
COST-SHARE PROGRAM TO HELP FARMERS RECOVERING FROM DROUGHT

RALEIGH — North Carolina farmers reeling from drought can obtain help under a program unveiled Tuesday in Raleigh. The program will cover 75 percent of the cost of restoring drought-damaged pastureland and providing additional water supply for livestock and crops.

The N.C. Agricultural Drought Recovery Program will be administered statewide through local Soil and Water Conservation district offices beginning May 1. It was made possible by a $6 million grant from the N.C. Tobacco Trust Fund Commission.

“This grant makes it possible for more than 1,000 farmers and farm operations to restore some of the damage from last summer’s severe drought and to prepare, so the next long, hot and dry summer doesn’t do as much damage,” said Billy Ray Hall, president of the N.C. Rural Economic Development Center.

The Rural Center worked with the General Assembly’s Joint Select Committee on Agriculture Drought Response, the Tobacco Trust Fund Commission, several state agencies and other agricultural interests to design the program and arrange funding. The Division of Soil and Water Conservation, which will administer the program, is part of the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources. Others participating in the program design were the N.C. Department of Agriculture, North Carolina Grange, N.C. Farm Bureau, N.C. State University Agricultural Extension Service, N.C. Foundation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, U.S. Department of Agriculture, N.C. Soil and Water Conservation Commission and Agricultural Advancement Consortium.

Rep. Ray Rapp, co-chairman of the legislative committee, said a bill seeking an additional $6 million to extend the program to more farmers will be submitted to the General Assembly in May.

“We recognized that any proposal we made to the legislature could not go into effect before July at the earliest, too late to save many of our farmers,” Rapp said. “Fortunately, the friends of agriculture in North Carolina are not limited to members of the General Assembly. Money from the Tobacco Trust Fund lets us put this project into effect immediately.”

The U.S. Department of Agriculture last year designated 85 of North Carolina’s 100 counties as natural disaster areas. As of April 8, 80 counties remained under drought conditions with the other 20 considered abnormally dry.

Farmers affected by the drought may apply to one of the state’s 96 Soil and Water Conservation district offices for help with several types of projects. These include pasture renovation, drilling and redrilling wells, pond construction and renovation, converting closed lagoons to fresh water ponds, and upgrading existing irrigation systems to more efficient models. The program is open to farmers with a total adjusted gross income of less than $250,000 or those who derive 75 percent of their income from farming operations.

“North Carolina farmers lost a half billion dollars in crops last year because of this drought – that’s 17 percent of total crop revenue in a typical year,” said Sen. Charlie Albertson, also a committee co-chair. “The damage wasn’t merely in lost harvest. Pastureland needs to be renovated and reseeded before livestock can graze again, and we’re still in this drought. Farmers really need our help to go forward.”
FACT SHEET

N.C. AGRICULTURE DROUGHT RECOVERY PROGRAM

Purpose: This cost-sharing project will assist farmers with restoring drought-damaged pastureland and providing additional water supply for livestock and crops.

Description: The project responds to immediate, critical needs resulting from the record-breaking drought of 2007. Grants will cover 75% of the cost of certain projects necessary to restore pasturelands to usable condition or to create new or improved water supplies for livestock and crops, to avoid crises in the event of future drought. Recipients will cover the remaining 25% of the cost. Eligible projects include:

- Pasture renovation
- Drilling and redrilling wells
- Pond construction and renovation
- Conversion of closed lagoons to fresh water ponds
- Upgrading existing irrigation systems

Technical assistance will be available to assist farmers with grass selection and other pastureland management for long-term productivity.

Who is eligible: Eligible applicants are all North Carolina farmers adversely affected by the drought of 2007 with a total adjusted gross income of less than $250,000 or those who derive 75% of their income from farming operations.

How it will be administered: The Division of Soil and Water Conservation of the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources will operate the program through its 96 district offices, located through the state. Farmers may contact their local district office to learn if they are eligible and how to apply.

Timetable: The program gets under way May 1. It will end upon the depletion of available funds or until the need has been met.

Source: The N.C. Tobacco trust Fund commission has awarded a $6 million grant to launch the project. An additional $6 million is being requested from the N.C. General Assembly.


For more information: Contact Billy Guillet, Director of the Agricultural Advancement consortium, N.D. Rural Economic Development center, at (919) 250-4314 or bguillet@ncruralcenter.org.
Farm Service Agency (FSA) News
Livestock Compensation Program (LCP) Sign-Up
By: Kim Rumfelt, County Executive Director

The Livestock Compensation Program provides benefits to livestock producers who suffered feed losses or incurred additional feed costs resulting from natural disasters occurring between January 1, 2007 and December 31, 2007. To be eligible the livestock must be: dairy cattle, beef cattle, buffalo, beefalo, equine, poultry, elk, reindeer, sheep, goats, swine or deer. The livestock must have been owned or cash leased and maintained for commercial use. Beef and dairy cattle must have weighed 500 pounds or more on either January 1, 2007 or April 6, 2007. Producers will choose either April 6, 2007 (start date of the freeze) or January 1, 2007 (start date of the drought).

Information needed includes:

1. **List all your farming interests**: If you have not been to our office to update your farming interests such as: acquiring farmland, leasing/operating a new farm then bring deed(s) if you have bought a farm. If land is leased bring the lease agreement if applicable. If operating as a partnership or corporation bring articles of organization/incorporation. Bring a **voided check** for direct deposit.

2. **Know number of acres grazed what type of grass and how many days grazed.** Also, need to know where the livestock was physically located on January 1, 2007 and where they are now.

3. **Livestock kind, type and weight range**: For beef and dairy cattle there are 2 categories of weight ranges; **non-adult** weighing 500 lbs or more and **adult** cows and bulls. Calves are not eligible. Sheep and goats have no weight range category, so count all. Poultry count all weighing 8 pounds or more.

4. Also need to know if livestock was removed as a direct result of the disaster.

Applications will not be accepted until all documentation is on file. We don’t want you to make several trips to have a completed application, so give us a call if you have any questions prior to coming in to sign up. No deadline has been set at this time for taking applications. Get you information together. Call if you have questions 828-439-9727 ext 106.

**POISONOUS PLANTS**

Because of their inquisitive nature and tolerance of "bitter" or high tannin material, goats may eat unpalatable weeds and wild shrubs that may be poisonous, such as cherry or milkweed. The absence or the severity of poisoning is related to the quantity of material consumed, the portion and age of the plant eaten, the season of the year, the age and size of the animal, and other factors. In addition, several ornamental plants that are grown outdoors or indoors are highly toxic. For example, goats should not have access to, or be fed clippings of yew, azaleas, oleanders, rhododendrons, delphinium, lily-of-the-valley and larkspur.

Goats are often not affected by poisonous compounds or anti-nutritional factors if a sufficient number of other plant species are available. Because goats prefer to consume a very varied diet, the detrimental affects of poisonous compounds found in certain plants are diluted.

Continued on page 6
Common poisonous plants

Plants that contain prussic acid (hydrocyanic acid)

These plants contain under certain conditions, prussic acid (hydrocyanic acid), a deadly poison which interferes with the oxygen-carrying ability of the blood. Death in these cases is usually rapid and with few outward symptoms. Members of the Prunus family of plants, especially wild cherries, are dangerous. Peaches, plums, wild cherry, and other stone fruits belong to this group of plants. Wilting of the green leaves caused by frost, storm damage, or by cutting, changes a glucoside (glycoside) found in the leaves to hydrocyanic acid (HCN) and sugar. The sweet, wilted leaves are thus more attractive to animals than normal foliage. Hydrocyanic acid content varies widely, but under some conditions a few handfuls of leaves may be enough to kill a horse or cow. This type of poisoning should be suspected when sudden death of animals follows windstorms or early sharp frosts. These leaves apparently lose their poison after they have become dry; the limp, green or partially yellowed leaves are the most dangerous.

Sudan grass and sorghums are also cyanogenetic plants. These plants are usually deadly when damaged or frozen. Aftermath sprouts following an early frost are particularly dangerous. Very little sudan grass poisoning occurs from animals trampling down plants and later eating them although this is often listed as dangerous. In dry weather, sudan grass is often pastured to the ground without ill effects. After sudan grass has been repeatedly frozen and the plants are completely dead, it is safe but not very valuable for pasture. Once frozen, sorghum, sorghum sudan hybrids, or their aftermath should never be pastured. As long as the plants show any green color they may be very poisonous. Both frosted sorghum and sudan grass can be best and most safely utilized by ensiling them for at least two weeks before feeding. Normal ensilage fermentation safely eliminates the poisonous compounds.

Other plants of this group include:

- Common milkweed, a perennial that grows three or four feet high, has a heavy stem and leaves and is frequently found in pastures.
- Horsenettle, a perennial plant, two-feet high, with spiny stems and leaves, and smooth, orange-yellow berries. Fruits are more toxic than the foliage. It's a common plant in grasslands and fields and is a member of the nightshade family.
- Black nightshade, an annual plant, two-feet high, with many branches. Leaves are variably smooth or hairy. The stems are angled in cross-section and sometimes spiny. Clusters of white flowers, one-fourth inch across, bloom in midsummer and are followed by small, black fruits. Both the foliage and green berries are toxic. The ripe berries are not poisonous. Black nightshade is widely distributed.
- Mountain laurels and rhododendrons, evergreen shrubs of the Appalachian Mountains region. Plants grow five-feet tall and have glossy green leaves. Flowers appear in clusters at the ends of branches. Livestock eat the leaves in early spring when little other foliage is available.
- Piedmont Azaleas are deciduous plants of the Piedmont.
- Several varieties of Leucothe, also called Fetterbush or Dog-hobble, are evergreen or deciduous plants found in most regions of North Carolina and other southeastern states. Weakness, nausea, salivation and vomiting are symptoms of poisoning. The preventative is to keep livestock out of areas where these plants are abundant.

Plants Containing Deadly Alkaloids

Fortunately these plants are unpalatable for most wild and domestic animals:

- Water hemlock and poison hemlock are deadly. Poisoning rarely occurs except in early spring when young plants are accidentally eaten.
- Mayapple, bloodroot, pokeweed, nightshade and hellebore are other alkaloid-containing plants. They are rarely eaten except when animals are starving for better feed. Deaths from alkaloid-containing plants usually result from severe digestive disturbances, pain and nervous symptoms. Animals usually die in convulsions.
Plants That Are Photodynamic
This means photo-sensitive animals get a reaction. In typical cases, an animal suddenly becomes sore on the white areas of its body. Whole areas of white skin may raise up and slough off. White goats may become severely affected and die from this condition. Some common plants, which cause photosensitization are: Rape (canola), alsike clover, buckwheat, lantana, St. John's wort, and ornamental hypericums. Both St. John's wort and ornamental hypericums have showy, golden-yellow flowers. Animals do not readily eat them. White goats frequently become badly "sunburned" when they are on rape (canola) pasture in bright, sunny weather with little or no shade.

Plants That Produce Mechanical Injury
A number of plants may have a spiny covering, long beards, fine hairs and when eaten may cause mechanical injuries or form hairballs in the stomach and intestines. Sand bur, downy brome grass, squirrel-tail grass, poverty grass, mesquite, and cocklebur are some of the offending plants.

PARASITES AND PASTURES
One of the best ingredients of a parasite control program is reducing the number of parasites that the goats are exposed to in the first place. One way to accomplish this is to manage your pastures in a way that will reduce its parasite load. There are several ways to do this:

1. Take a hay crop. This type of pasture can be incorporated into a dose-and-move program in which goats are grazed on one pasture in the early grazing season and then moved to another goat pasture which was used for a first cutting of hay. Another move before the end of the grazing season will probably provide the best parasite control.

2. Incorporate annual pastures into the grazing system and drag some implement in the stubble before planting.

3. Incorporate into the grazing system plants containing high concentrations of tannins such as sericea lespedeza and chicory. Alternatively, incorporate fodder shrubs that contain high concentrations of tannins, such as black locust.

4. Graze a contaminated pasture with another livestock species. The goat parasite larvae cannot survive in the gastrointestinal tract of another herbivore species. THIS DOES NOT APPLY TO SHEEP, which share worms with goats. Another approach is to use a first grazer, second grazer system using two livestock species.

5. Use control grazing practices to optimize pasture production. This is a better practice than continuous grazing on the same pasture because goats will return to the same areas where their favorite plants are growing, thus those areas will become heavily infected by gastrointestinal parasite larvae.

6. In extensive situations with an abundance of pasture land compared to the number of goats, allow the goats to have plenty of forage, thus giving them the opportunity to select the most nutritious parts of plants. In such situations, goats will not graze close to the ground and thus will not ingest many gastrointestinal parasites.

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7. Put goats in a browse area (woodlot) when environmental conditions favor the rapid life cycle of gastrointestinal parasites (hot and humid). By browsing, goats will not consume forage close to the ground where the parasite larvae are located (0 to 5 inches from the ground level). In addition, many browse plants have the additional benefit of harboring high tannin concentrations. Tannins have been shown to reduce fecal egg counts and possible gastrointestinal parasite larvae numbers.

8. Always put goats with the highest nutritional requirements on the best quality pastures you have on your farm. Good nutrition allows a more effective immune response to fight gastrointestinal parasites.

9. Rest a pasture. Unfortunately, it takes a long time for the worm eggs and larvae to die off if the pasture is just left empty. A year or at least an entire grazing season is required, which is usually impractical.

Newsletter compiled and edited by:

Mario DeLuca, Extension Agent, Livestock, Agriculture

Secretarial support by: Cheryl Mitchell

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