FROM THE COUNTY AGENT’S DESK...

A fine, icy start we’ve had to winter 2013-2014, huh? A good round of snow and ice back in the first half of December will likely help overcome any soil moisture deficits that we were facing heading into this winter. Cattle energy demands go up any time there’s snow and ice on the ground and temperatures are south of freezing. Make sure that there’s plenty of hay available.

Keep that all in mind in the coming few months.

Check out the information regarding the upcoming sheep and goat meeting that will be held on January 21st. I know that this newsletter has primarily targeted beef cattle operators in the past, but it’s going to serve as a means of notifying the small ruminant folks about his program as well. Please let any sheep and goat producers know about this workshop. Or, if you’ve ever thought about multi-species grazing on your own cattle operation to help control some undesirable weeds, you’re absolutely welcome to come as well to learn more about internal parasite management in small ruminant animals.
Also, I’m on the lookout for someone with a barn and working facilities that would be willing to host a bull testing clinic sometime in late winter. It’d be an event where producers could bring their bull at a pre-appointed time to be semen tested and have a BSE (Breeding Soundness Exams) done by a licensed veterinarian. The details, dates, etc. are still all to be determined, but first things first; I’ve got to find a location with the facilities to handle some bulls. If you’re interested in helping out, please let me know at 870-895-3301

Thanks,
Brad

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FEBRUARY PESTICIDE TRAINING FOR PRIVATE APPLICATOR LICENSES (PAT)

Brad Runsick, CEA - Agriculture

The spring pesticide training will be held on February 4th, 2014 at the North Arkansas Electric Cooperative Orange Room at 6:00 p.m. This will serve as the only opportunity in Fulton County to get your license training this spring. The next chance will come sometime late fall 2014. If you can’t make this one, there will be one held by Izard County Extension in Melbourne at Ozarka College on January 30th at 6:00 p.m.

For those who don’t know, a license is required to purchase restricted use pesticides. Two of the most common, 2, 4-D to control broadleaf weeds and lambda-cyhalothrin to control armyworms, are both restricted use.

Pesticide Applicator Training is approximately a two-hour course to certify Arkansas agricultural producers who wish to purchase and apply Restricted Use Pesticides (RUP’s). However, the information presented could also be useful for anyone interested in learning more about pesticide regulations, labeling, application equipment and safety issues. This training is NOT for certification of commercial (for-hire) pesticide applicators!

There is a $10 per person fee which must be paid at the door at the time of training. This fee is not related to the licensing fees charged by the State Plant Board. It is only for the training. The fee for the license is $10 for one (1) year or $45 for five (5) years. That amount you will pay in later to the State Plant Board, not the Fulton Co. Extension Office. Please feel free to call us at the office at 870-895-3301 if you’ve got any questions. There's no need to call to pre-register.

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NITROGEN FROM SNOWFALL: IS IT ENOUGH TO MATTER?

Brad Runsick, Fulton County Extension Agent

With the abundance of snowfall, the conversation among farmers is likely to turn to the additional N content provided by that snowfall. However, what is the actual value of that snowfall. No doubt, much of the value comes in the way of additional moisture that helps to saturate our soils throughout winter before heading into the spring growing season, but what about the nitrogen?
A couple things you have to know is: How much N is in the snowfall, and how much is plant available (nitrate and ammonium) or will be within a reasonable amount of time? Nitrogen content of snowfall is also dependent upon the amount of pollution in an area. Given the higher amounts of pollution of the eastern U.S., we tend to have a little more N in our precipitation than, say, the western U.S.

Truth is, our soils receive nitrogen from any precipitation. It does take snow precipitation longer to move downward through the soil profile, but it does not contain any more nitrogen per volume that rain. On the average, 10 inches of snow equates to about 1 inch of rain. Wetter snow will be more, and more powdery snow will be less. So, perhaps, it is possible that more of that nitrogen from snowfall stays in the root zone longer, but that doesn't mean that it's just saturated with nitrogen.

It's important to note that, on average, our soils will produce about 1 ton of grass on their own per year without any additional N fertilization, but in order to produce an additional ton of yield, another 40-60 lbs. of N needs to be added. Snowfall, or any precipitation for that matter, won't nearly touch that. At the very, very best, our annual precipitation might dump 6-7 lbs. of nitrogen per acre on our fields. A drop in the bucket, so to speak. A good winter snowfall event does not negate the need for springtime fertilizations, nor does it mean that producers should lower their application rates.

**LATE WINTER–EARLY SPRING SPRAYING**

Brad Runsick, CEA – Agriculture

It'll only be late December/early January by the time you get this, but now is the time to start thinking about spring weed control. Sometime toward the end of January, get out those sprayers and make sure that everything is in working order because Mother Nature only leaves some short windows for spring spraying. Depending on temperatures, we’re only about 8-10 weeks from late winter/early spring spraying. Winter annual weeds, such as buttercup, and perennials, such as thistles will be just itching to germinate once the soil warms in February-March. Here in about 10 weeks, a lot of producers will look out across their pasture as they drive by and say, “There’s aren’t any weeds out there. I believe I’ll wait another month or so.” However, underneath that dormant base of grass, little ½”- 1” winter annuals that have just started their lives and thistles rosettes would love a good dose of 2,4-D.

There are several benefits to an early spraying. You’ll reduce the nutrient and water competition with your desirable species, allowing them to kick off spring with some good greenup. Also, spraying these weeds when they’re young and tender allows for lower rates of herbicide. A pint of 2,4-D will kill more seedlings now than it will in mid-April. The downside is: you may get another round of germination after your first spraying. If so, spray it again. A pint of 2,4-D amine is only about $3/acre chemical cost. You can curtail this, somewhat, by allowing as much winter annuals to germinate as possible before that first spraying. Just don’t let the earliest germinating ones get much over
3-4". However, you probably need to plan on a mid-April to June spraying in addition to this one anyway to catch the ragweed, horse and bull nettle, wooly croton (goatweed), and Sericea lespedeza. If you need any help calibrating a sprayer, feel free to give me a call, and I can come out and help you out. I do ask that everything be in working order when I get there. For more information concerning weed control or sprayer calibration, give us a call here at the Fulton Co. Extension Office at 870-895-3301.

**SHEEP AND GOAT INTERNAL PARASITE WORKSHOP**

Brad Runsick, Fulton County Extension Agent

On January 21, 2014 at 6 p.m. at the Orange Room at North Arkansas Electric Cooperative, we'll be having a sheep and goat workshop on identifying and managing internal parasite problems in small ruminants, such as sheep and goats.

This meeting will be open to all. There's no cost to attend, but there will not be a meal. Please give us a call by January 19th at 870-895-3301 to let me know if you're attending, so I'll have some idea of how many folks to expect. Steve Jones, Extension Small Ruminant specialist, will be the keynote speaker. Also, if it works out, we'll have some goats there to compare some symptoms between a healthy vs. a wormy goat!

Please invite all sheep and goat producers that you know. The meeting is also going to serve as a general interest meeting for me to gauge interest and get input from producers on what kind of educational needs are out there for Fulton County sheep and goat producers. Be there if you want to have your input on sheep and goat educational programs in Fulton County in 2014.

**CONVENTIONALLY PRODUCED BEEF...SAFE AND SUSTAINABLE?**

Dr. Paul Beck, Southwest Research and Extension Center

We are all bombarded with the propaganda that conventionally raised beef is not healthy or sustainable by media, society, and even some of our fellow producers. Organic, all-natural, and grass-fed beef is lauded as the only environmentally sustainable way to produce beef. While these are great marketing tools for niche markets, they do not fit two of the cornerstones of sustainability...namely economically feasible for consumers to purchase and capability to produce adequately to meet demand. Current technology enables the beef industry to produce 131% more beef than in 1977 with 70% fewer animals, utilizing less water and feed while producing less methane and carbon dioxide. If production was shifted back to a grass finishing industry like America in the 1880’s or countries like Australia or Argentina are known for (which incidentally are developing their own grain finishing capabilities), Jude Capper, noted sustainability consultant, estimates it would require 64 million more head of grass fed cattle than are currently needed in conventionally produced cattle. This would require millions more acres of pasture and much greater resource use (fuel, water, and fertilizer) to provide equivalent beef production to the consumers.
There are multiple tools that beef producers use to provide efficient economically sustainable protein to consumers. Growth promoting hormones and ionophores (compounds like Rumensin, Bovatec, or Gainpro) increase the rate of growth and feed efficiency of cattle. These are compounds that not only are available to the feedlot sector but can be used by Arkansas cow-calf and stocker producers as well. Research at the University of Arkansas Livestock and Forestry Research Station proves that growing steers implanted with growth promotants and supplemented with ionophores gained 40 pounds more than steers that did not receive these technologies, leading to increased beef production and improved economic sustainability. Ionophores are antimicrobial compounds that inhibit the growth of rumen microbes that disrupt ruminal fermentation; thus they help capture more feed energy. Implants increase muscle mass and decrease fat which is more energetically efficient for growing calves. These compounds are proven safe in production of our food supply. A common misconception about our beef supply is the estrogen content of beef from implanted beef cattle. Where a 3 ounce serving of beef from an implanted contains about 1.9 nanograms of estrogen, common foods like peas or soybean products contain 10 times that amount and cabbage contains 100 times that amount per serving. As far as these levels of hormone affecting development of our youth, a pre-pubertal boy produces over 41,000 nanograms of estrogen per day and a pre-pubertal girl over 54,000 nanograms.

Great strides have been made in the efficiency of beef production over the last 30 years, retaining beef’s status as a safe, affordable, and preferred staple in our larders. Most of the increase in efficiency has come from the stocker and finishing segments of our industry, but between 60 and 80% of the carbon footprint of beef production is in the cow-calf sector. Thus, the cow-calf sector is where future improvements in efficiency need to be made. In many instances, simple improvements in the husbandry practices we have in place at the local level can boost the efficiency of the entire beef production chain.

In closing, the beef industry can continue to provide a safe, affordable, and plentiful (and thus sustainable) product to consumers, as long as we have available the tools to do it. If we begin limiting technology for beef production (such as beta agonists or lean finely textured beef) then our ability to meet consumer demand will be limited as well.

From the University of Arkansas Research & Extension Livestock and Forage blog at:

www.arkansas-livestock.com

Check it out and subscribe!
FOR THE HEALTH OF IT!

MaLinda Coffman, Fulton County Family & Consumer Science Agent

We live in an increasingly noisy world. Not only does the overall noise level seem to be going up, but we are surrounded by a growing number of tools, toys and other gadgets that make noise – and lots of it. Noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL) occurs when tiny sensory cells in our inner ear, called hair cells, are damaged by sounds that are too loud and that last too long. How near we are to the source of the noise also matters. NIHL can be permanent – but it is also preventable. You can help enjoy healthy hearing for a lifetime by learning about hearing protectors and when to use them.

Remember the 4 P’s of NIHL

Noise-Induced Hearing Loss is:

Painless
Progressive
Permanent

But it is also Preventable.

When are hearing protectors recommended?

Hearing protectors are recommended whenever a person’s hearing is exposed to noise levels that exceed a certain level and time. This level in the workplace has been set at 85 decibels (dB) for exposures longer than eight continuous hours. The louder the sound, the shorter the time before damage can occur. For more information contact MaLinda Coffman, FCS agent at 895-3301 or mcoffman@uaex.edu
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