FROM THE COUNTY AGENT’S DESK...

Well, I don't think there's any doubt that we've been flirting with a drought for the last month or so. At the time of this writing this newsletter (7/22/13), the U.S. Drought Monitor has over 90% of Arkansas classified as at least Abnormally Dry, and some areas in SW Arkansas, Madison, Newton, and Searcy Counties already listed as Severe Drought. That was before the last rain, so we should be in a little better shape once the new drought monitor map comes out. Fortunately, a lot of folks had a great first cutting of hay, and a lot of farms got a good dose of rain this past weekend.

Pasture planning for a rain shortage can be done just as quickly as pasture planning for a rain surplus. After the struggles of the past two years, many farmers were quick to change how they do...
business on managing their pastures, and sometimes, rightly so. However, keep in mind that two years of bad summers in 2011-2012 doesn’t equate to a trend. Just like two years of wet summers, like a lot of farms had in 2008-2009, doesn’t mean that you can plan on massive amounts of forage in July and August. Bear in mind, the recommendations on forage management are given based on several years’ worth of weather information. We still need to plan on cool season forages in spring and fall and warm season forages in the summer. Additionally, making use of stockpiled fescue and bermudagrass and winter annuals to get us deep into winter is a fairly standard forage management practice in our part of the country.

Plan for the average year and react to the exception years, good or bad. Be prepared to grow grass when you can. Otherwise, you’ll be stuck with average forage when there is plenty of rain and less than sufficient grass when things are bad. Not to mention, those drought stressed pastures that were taken care of in the good years will recover faster and more cost-effectively than those that weren’t. Average doesn’t cut it in the livestock and forage business.

**FULTON COUNTY EXTENSION LIVESTOCK AND FORAGE FIELD DAY**

The Fulton County Extension Office will be conducting a field day on Wednesday August 21st from 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. at Rich Horner’s place at Camp and at the Fulton County Fairgrounds Theater Building. This is the building that sits on the left on the corner before you turn to go to the Hickinbotham-Miller exhibit building. Speakers and topics will include:

- Defined Calving and Breeding Seasons and On-Farm Recordkeeping
  - Dr. Tom Troxel, Professor and Associate Dept. Head – Animal Science

- Forage Brassica Nutrition and Winter Feeding
  - Dr. Shane Gadberry, Extension Beef Nutrition Specialist

- Native Warm Season Grasses – Facts and Myths
  - Dr. John Jennings, Extension Forage Specialist

- Broadcast Seeder and Sprayer Calibration
  - Kenny Simon, Forage Program Associate
  - Brad Runsick, Fulton Co. Extension Agent
Lunch and educational materials will be provided. Cost to attend is $10 per person to cover the cost of the food and printing. We will be in the field for part of the field day, so I would advise you to bring a chair. You can pay that day once we get back to the fairgrounds or by coming by the office to pay, but please contact our office to let us know that you’re coming, so I’ll have an idea on how many burgers to grill!

“BEEF IQ” COURSES AND
FIELD DAYS (FULTON,
BAXTER, AND MARION
COUNTIES)

Fulton, Baxter, and Marion County Extension Offices are considering offering the Beef IQ course that has been very popular around the state. In the past, the program was offered only in central locations around the state, but we wanted to be able to make it a little easier on producers that don’t live so close to those “central” locations.

The program will focus on 6 broad areas of beef management:

1.) economics and ranch planning
2.) herd health and well-being
3.) nutrition
4.) genetics
5.) reproduction
6.) pasture and forages.

The Beef IQ program is treated almost like a college course without the homework and tests! It is made up of 18 hours of classroom/educational meetings and 8 hours of field day work that will be more hands-on. That will be broken down into 6 three hour classroom type meetings and 2 four hour field/hands-on activities. Of the 6 classroom meetings, two will be held in each county. So, that’ll be two in Salem, two in Mtn. Home, and two in Marion County (either Yellville or Flippin). They’ll likely be in the evening. Education will be presented by the county agents and Extension Animal Science specialists in their respective areas of expertise. The program will likely start around this November and run through until the fall of 2014, depending on what we work out.

The cost to participate is $75. With that, you’ll be registered for all meetings and field days and have access to all of the information on the Arkansas Beef IQ website (presentations, how-to videos, computer program decision aids, and lots of reading material). If you don’t have internet access,
for an additional $50 you can purchase a USB (thumb) drive that contains the same information as the website. This program is available to 4-H youth as well, but they must also have an adult accompany them. In order to “graduate” from the Beef IQ program, you must attend at least 4 of the 6 classroom meetings and at least 1 field day. Dates and locations will be determined once it is confirmed that we are for sure going to have it. You’ll have plenty of advance notice.

If you are interested, please return the enclosed application form. We’ve got 15 slots available for each county, and I’ll enroll producers on a first come, first serve basis. You won’t pay your fee until a later date, once we know for sure that we’ve got enough farmers signed up. The application doesn’t bind or commit you to anything, but please be pretty certain that you want to participate before turning it in. It just lets me know that you’re interested. Give me a call if you’ve got any questions at 870-895-3301.

Fulton, Baxter, and Marion Beef IQ Application

Name

Location

Phone

Type of Operation (stocker, cow-calf, etc.)

Preferred Day of the Week for meetings (circle all that apply):

M  TU  W  TH  F

Cut this out and return to Fulton Co. Extension Office, P.O. Box 308, Salem, AR 72576
ARKANSAS STEER FEEDOUT PROGRAM

The Arkansas Steer Feedout program is back for 2013. I’m not sure if any of you ever enrolled in this in past years, but if so, you undoubtedly learned a lot about the beef industry and quality of cattle that you’re raising. This is a great educational program for a farmer who’s interested in the end product of the commodity that they’ve had a hand in producing. If you are interested in signing up, let me know, and I’ll get you the nomination forms and assist in filling out the necessary paperwork.

Here are a few details from Extension Animal Scientist, Dr. Tom Troxel:

1. Nominations must be received by October 18, 2013
2. Five Head Minimum per Consignor
3. $30 per Head Nomination Fee
4. Cattle must weigh 500-850 pounds upon arrival

1. A producer may consign as many steers as desired, however the minimum number of steers that can be consigned is five. When nominations are received, producers will be sent a background information form that must be fully completed and returned before entries are final.

2. Only calves weighing 500-850 pounds upon arrival will be accepted. A steer feedout ear tag for each calf will be mailed to the producer through the county agent. Each calf must have the ear tag in place when the calves arrive at the feedyard. Each calf should also be tagged with a ranch ear tag. This will provide a double identification system. Place the steer feedout ear tag in the left ear.

3. It is strongly suggested that the calves are backgrounded prior to leaving the farm. A general recommendation would be to wean 45 days prior to shipment (November 7, 2013). At the time of weaning, vaccinate with a respiratory vaccine (IBR-PI3-BVD-BRSV). Revaccinate 2 weeks after the first vaccination. Vaccination with a modified live virus vaccine is suggested. It is also suggested calves be vaccinated with a clostridial vaccine (2 doses) and dewormed (at weaning). Consult with your local veterinarian to assess what other health needs should be addressed.

4. Assistance will be provided in coordinating shipment to the feedyard. Indications of requests for this type of assistance must be made on the nomination form and must be received by October 18, 2013. If a producer
would like to deliver their own calves, they
must arrive at Wheeler Bros. Feedyard on
November 7, 2013 by 5:00 p.m. If you plan to
transport your own cattle, call Wheeler Bros.
Feedyard (580-623-4934) for directions and to
make delivery arrangements.

5. Upon arrival, cattle will be processed according
to standard feedyard procedure.

6. Cattle will be sorted into an appropriate
number of expected outcome groups based on
weight, frame size and flesh condition.

7. Animals that require treatment for any illness
will be treated according to guidelines
established by the feedyard veterinarian. Costs
of treatment will be charged to the owner. The
feedyard management and the Arkansas Steer
Feedout Program management will make every
effort to safeguard the health of all animals, but
will assume no responsibility for death loss or
sickness.

8. After an acceptable length of time, calves that
are not achieving an economic rate of gain will
be sold as realizers and the proceeds placed in
escrow for disbursement at the end of the
program. Owners will be notified when such
calves are salvaged and when one of their calves
dies.

9. Feed consumption for each pen will be
determined at the time of close out. Individual
calf consumption will be prorated on the in-
weight and average daily gain.

10. Charges to be assessed each entry at the end of
the feeding period include: (a) processing fee,
(b) yardage, (c) medicine costs, (d) feed cost, (e)
trucking costs, (f) items A thru E will be
financed at the prevailing interest rate and (g)
Beef Check Off ($1.00/head).

11. Entries will be marketed when individuals
reach the weight and condition regarded as
acceptable by the industry. The feedyard
manager will make this decision.

12. Calves will be weighed individually at the
conclusion of the feeding period and a 4%
pencil shrink will be applied to the final weight
to determine live sale weight for calculation of
feedyard performance.

13. The cattle will be sold on a carcass basis with
premiums and discounts for quality grades,
yield grades and carcass weights. Fair market
value for all sales will be attained, but neither
the feedyard nor Arkansas Steer Feedout
Program management guarantees the profitability of participation in the program. Proceeds will be mailed to the consignor after the expenses listed in item 10 are deducted. Disbursement of funds will be approximately four to six weeks after each pen is closed out.

14. Feedyard performance information to be collected: average daily gain, total cost of gain, break-even, feed conversion and net return.

15. Carcass information to be collected: dressing percentage, carcass weight, ribeye area, fat thickness, USDA yield grade and USDA quality grade.

16. Producers will be sent a report after arrival at the feedyard with information on arrival weight and pen assignment.

17. At the conclusion of the feeding period, feedyard performance data and carcass information will be provided on each consignment. The information will be kept confidential for consignors to use in evaluating the cattle they are producing.

DELIVERY DATE & LOCATION:
Wheeler Bros. Feedyard, Watonga, OK
November 7, 2013 by 5:00 p.m.

MAIL NOMINATION ENTRIES TO:
Dr. Tom Troxel
Arkansas Steer Feedout Program
2301 S. University Avenue
Little Rock, AR 72204

FORAGE DROUGHT MANAGEMENT

Brad Runsick, Fulton County Extension Agent

Like I mentioned before, drought is upon us yet again, but this year we ought to have learned some lessons from the previous year. This big difference between this year and the last is that we had rain later into June than we did, so hopefully we don’t have to go quite as many days until fall rain sets in. Pastures were able to make up a lot of ground in recovering, but as you well know, things are starting to dry up and get brown again. With that being said, perhaps my best advice to you, from a forage management perspective is this:

Avoid overgrazing. Feed hay if you must, but avoid overgrazing if at all possible. I know that it’s hard for a producer to pull cattle off of a pasture when there seems to be some forage still available out there, but it’s necessary and will pay off in the long
run. Consider these reasons why pulling off of drought stressed pastures is important

1.) When plants have undergone some kind of stress, such as dry conditions, they store up most of their energy in the form of carbohydrates in their roots. At that point, most of the topgrowth of the plant is of fairly low nutritional value.

2.) If there’s no topgrowth, there’s no root growth. After the plant has bounced back from being cut or grazed, the amount of roots will most always equal top growth. If there are no roots to store reserves, the plant has a lot harder time recovering from drought stress.

3.) Taking off all of that forage also takes away the shade that covers the soil. No shade results in higher soil temperatures that sap moisture out of the ground faster and can damage roots. The shade that a grass plant puts on the surface of the soil protects its own roots from high temperatures more than you might know.

4.) Cattle grazing plants that are that close to the soil are possibly more likely to contract some of these soil-borne diseases that affect livestock. Don’t fail to keep cattle blackleg vaccinated.

Last year, in one of the worst droughts on record, pastures that weren’t pushed too far still bounced back after fall rain returned. Now, they didn’t recover 100%, but those pastures that weren’t pushed too hard July-August did manage to recover with ample moisture. The fescue that dropped seed in the spring germinated back last fall, and recall how good a lot of this bermudagrass looked after the fall rains returned.

Stockpiling

Also, to make up for having to feed hay in summer, stockpiling forages in the fall might be an option. It might be one of the easiest practices there are to extend the grazing season. For bermudagrass, graze down to 2-3” by late July. Put on 50-60 lbs. N/acre or approximately 150-180 lbs. of ammonium nitrate/acre even if it’s dry and there’s no rain in the immediate forecast. Unlike urea, which can gas off (volatilize), ammonium nitrate will lie there awhile until rain returns. Then, graze from Oct.-Dec. Of course, you’ve got to get it before the first killing frost when it’ll lose its quality and become mostly unpalatable to cattle.

For cool season grasses such as fescue or orchardgrass, graze the pasture down to about 3-4” by September 1. Put on approximately 50-60 lbs. of N/acre. That equates to about 150-180 lbs. of ammonium nitrate (34-0-0). Then, defer grazing
until late November. That fescue will be grazeable as long as it isn’t covered in snow or ice.

If fertilizer cost is holding you back, consider this. That 150 lbs. of ammonium nitrate is going to run you about $30 - $40 per acre. So, about 1 bale of hay. Let’s say that bale of hay is 800 lbs. Ninety-five percent of 4X5s don’t weigh nearly that (more like 550-700), but we’ll go with it. Under good fertility, in part provided by the ammonium nitrate, a 10” stand of bermudagrass will equal about 2600 lbs. of forage dry matter. An 8” stand of fescue will yield around 1680.

Now, with standing forage, cattle won’t utilize all of that, particularly if they are just turned in to continuously graze it. That’s where rotation through it or strip grazing it comes in handy. You’ll get about 70% grazing efficiency on that which is closely managed. Continuous grazing it results in around 35% efficiency. Then again, they aren’t 100% efficient at cleaning up hay either.

If you ever want more information on stockpiling, feel free to give me a call at 870-895-3301 or my cell at 870-750-0848.

PLANTING WINTER ANNUALS

Dr. John Jennings, Extension Forage Specialist
Kenny Simon, Program Associate
Jason Kelley, Extension Wheat and Feed Grains

The drought effects will be felt long after any normal rainfall arrives. Producers needing to provide quick grazing will soon be planting winter annual forages such as annual ryegrass, wheat, and cereal rye. Variety selection is important. Lowest price makes some varieties appealing, but often the cheapest varieties are not the best forage producers. In fact, some of the cheaper varieties don’t have sufficient cold tolerance for most of Arkansas conditions. A cheap variety becomes very expensive if it winterkills or produces very little forage growth. In a year like this, it can pay to plant known varieties to ensure forage production.

Ryegrass

For north Arkansas, cold tolerance is important. Refer to the Arkansas Plant Hardiness Zone map in Figure 1. The area north of Zone 6A, 6B, 7A and even the northern fringe of Zone 7B can be cold enough for winterkill of sensitive varieties.
Annual ryegrass varieties fall into two broad genetic categories - diploid varieties and tetraploid varieties. Diploid varieties tend to be more cold tolerant. Marshall ryegrass is an example of diploid ryegrass and is well known for its cold tolerance. Tetraploid varieties have broad leaves and good disease resistance, but usually are much less cold tolerant than diploid varieties. In Arkansas, we seldom have the disease pressure from rust and gray leaf spot found along the Gulf Coast so the superior disease resistance of many tetraploid varieties is not needed. In general terms, diploid varieties should be selected for northern Arkansas. Both tetraploid and diploid varieties can be used in southern Arkansas. Some variation in cold tolerance exists among types so not all diploid varieties are cold tolerant and not all tetraploid varieties have the same cold sensitivity. For example, Gulf annual ryegrass is a diploid type and is not cold tolerant. Gulf ryegrass and VNS (variety not stated) ryegrass are not recommended for these northern areas since winterkill has been reported in previous winters. Below is a non-inclusive list of annual ryegrass varieties of both diploid and tetraploid varieties that are being marketed.

Livestock & Forage Field Day
August 21st from 10-3
Call for more details!

University of Arkansas, United States Department of Agriculture and County Governments Co-operating. The Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service offers its programs to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, disability, marital or veteran status, or any other legally protected status, and is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.
### Annual Ryegrass Varieties*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diploid Varieties</th>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Tetraploid Varieties</th>
<th>Company</th>
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<tr>
<td>Bruiser**</td>
<td>Ampac Seed</td>
<td>Angus I</td>
<td>DLF International</td>
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<td>Marshall**</td>
<td>The Wax Co.</td>
<td>Attain</td>
<td>Smith Seed Services</td>
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<td>Paserrel Plus**</td>
<td>Pennington Seed</td>
<td>Big Boss</td>
<td>Smith Seed Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Surrey II</td>
<td>DLF International</td>
<td>Big Daddy</td>
<td>FFR/Sou. St.</td>
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<td>Tam 90</td>
<td>Tex. Ag Exp Sta.</td>
<td>Chuckwagon</td>
<td>DLF International</td>
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<td>Winter Hawk**</td>
<td>Oregro Seeds</td>
<td>Jumbo</td>
<td>Barenbrug USA</td>
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<td>Nelson</td>
<td>The Wax Co.</td>
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<td>Prine</td>
<td>East Texas Seed Co.</td>
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<td>Striker</td>
<td>Seed Research of OR</td>
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*Non-inclusive list of annual ryegrass varieties

**Very good cold tolerance

Ryegrass can be planted as early as late August. Typical planting times for planting on a tilled seedbed begin in early September through early November. The typical planting period for sod-seeding either by no-till or broadcast methods, begins in late September through early November. Early-planted ryegrass (September) can provide grazing in late fall. Late-planted ryegrass (November) will not provide significant grazing until late winter (March) except during warm winters such as 2011-12.

Seeding rate is 20-25 lbs/acre. The grass sod should be grazed or clipped to about 2” to improve seed/soil contact. If no-till planting, set the drill to
plant seed about ½” deep. For broadcast seeding in sod, seed/soil contact will be improved by pulling a harrow, tire drag, or other device to slightly scarify the sod when broadcasting the seed. Many producers pull a drag behind the broadcast seeder in the same pass to speed up the planting process.

**Wheat**

Most wheat varieties are selected for grain production, but an increasing number of livestock producers plant wheat for grazing purposes. Few variety trials measure forage yield, but some general observations have noted that earlier maturing wheat varieties produce more vegetative growth in fall and late winter. The U of A wheat variety testing report provides information on relative maturity dates and mature heights of tested varieties. The link to the 2011 report is [http://www.aragriculture.org/News/wheat_update/wheat_update_2011.pdf](http://www.aragriculture.org/News/wheat_update/wheat_update_2011.pdf)

Some wheat varieties that have been noted for better fall vegetative growth and good grazing potential include:

- AGS 2000
- AGS 2060
- HBK 3266
- Syngenta/Coker 9553
- Syngenta Magnolia
- Syngenta Arcadia

The following wheat varieties are commonly grown for grain, but should be avoided for grazing because they produce very little fall growth:

- Ranger
- Roane
- Pat
- Pioneer 26R10
- Pioneer 26R20
- Pioneer 26R22
- Terral 8861
- Terral 8848
- Syngenta Beretta
- Syngenta Oakes
- Armor Ricochet
- Progeny 870
- Dixie McAlister

General seed price ranges are $16-$18 per 50 lb bag. Field-run and feed wheat are currently $9-12 per 50 lb bag, but the variety or forage potential are usually unknown. An extra $5 per bag would certainly be worth the cost to get a variety that would provide more grazing.

**Triticale**

Triticale is a cross of wheat and rye. It has a growth pattern and yield closer to rye than wheat and makes very good forage. Dr. Paul Beck has shown good results at Southweste Research and Extension Center (SWREC) in grazing trials with it. Monarch is a variety that is available this year. Based on work done by Washington county agent, Johnny
Gunsaulis and Wayne Coblentz in 2005-06, this forage has the potential to make a hay or baleage crop by late November to early December if planted in early September. Adequate rainfall will be required for establishment and growth. Any small grain that reaches the “jointing” stage of growth in fall will likely winter kill; therefore, forage management should be planned to make use of early-planted varieties as hay, baleage, or as strip-grazed pasture to avoid loss of dry matter.

**Rye**

Rye provides more fall grazing and earlier spring grazing than wheat. It grows very rapidly in March so producers must be prepared to handle the fast growth either by grazing, as hay, or as baleage. Dr. Beck’s work has shown that to manage spring rye growth, half the field can be managed for graze-out and the other half can be harvested as baleage to improve forage utilization and to reduce waste. Some typical rye varieties are:

- Wintergrazer 70
- Elbon
- Maton

A variety named Rhymin rye, from Minnesota, was sold in Arkansas last fall. Producers that grew it reported good grazing and forage production. Seeding rates for small grains (rye, wheat, and triticale) is 90-120 lbs/acre. For a longer spring grazing season, ryegrass can be added. Seeding rates for this mixture of 100 lbs of small grain and 20 lbs ryegrass have been successful.

**Forage Brassica**

Brad Runsick, Fulton County Extension Agent

Forage brassicas are another great option for November and December grazing, and it’s one that we’ve got some data on here in Fulton County. Last year, on a producer’s farm, we planted 4 acres of forage turnips. Two acres of ‘Barkant’ and two acres of ‘Appin’ varieties were planted.

Perhaps the most important thing we learned was that proper seed bed preparation is a must, but they are relatively easy to establish. Our demonstration plot and others around the state has lead us believe that broadcast seeding turnips is most preferred over no-tilling. However, they can’t be broadcast directly on the soil surface without any soil preparation. The existing grass will need to be grazed or clipped down close, and the soil will need to be lightly disked. Cutting the soil just 3-4” is sufficient. You just want to break that sod just a little. Drag the field, and then broadcast. It won’t hurt to drag again after broadcasting the seed to achieve better seed-soil contact.
Applying 50-60 units of nitrogen (150-180 lbs. 34-0-0) after they get up is a good idea too. Some past experiment plots have resulted in nearly double the dry matter yield per acre.

For more information on forage brassicas, please make plans to attend our field day on Wednesday, August 21st. More information on that is at the beginning of this newsletter.

Note: Seed harvest is just now going on in seed producing parts of the nation, particularly Oregon. I would imagine that most ryegrass and fescue seed will start becoming available in mid-August. It’d be a good idea to go ahead and get your name on the list to purchase fescue, orchardgrass, and winter annual seed.

**FALL PESTICIDE LICENSE TRAINING FOR PRIVATE APPLICATORS**

Your fall opportunity to get or renew your private applicator pesticide license will be on Thursday, October 17th at 6:00 at the Fulton County

Fairgrounds Hickinbotham-Miller building. This will serve as the only opportunity in Fulton County to get your license training this fall. The next chance will come sometime late winter 2013/early spring 2014. If you know that you can’t make this one, there will be others held in neighboring counties, but those dates and locations are still to be determined.

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 2-3 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.

**THISTLES, THISTLES, AND MORE THISTLES**

Brad Runsick, Fulton County Extension Agent

(Adapted from a newspaper article for Area Wide News)

This summer, any conversation about pastures will inevitably turn to the amount of thistles we’re seeing this year. No doubt, it’s been a bumper crop year for thistles. They steal our moisture, sunlight, and fertilizer. It’s a shame that we can’t market those things. I did, however, see a bottle of milk thistle extract on the shelf at the pharmacy earlier this week. Again, good fortune is against us in that regard. Most of our thistles are bull, musk, or tall thistles, and they typically act as biennials. That is, they grow just vegetatively that first year and then bolt up a flower stalk and produce seed during the second year. So, all of these thistles we’re seeing this year have been here for awhile. They just went unnoticed until the field turned purple.

That being said, a yearly weed control plan would’ve taken care of most of what we’ve seen this spring and summer. Thistles are one of the easiest weeds to control with herbicide. Yes, you heard right. Thistles are easy to control. Folks seem to think that I’m crazy when I say that, but it’s true. The problem is, in their experience, they’ve had trouble controlling thistles mostly due to bad timing of herbicide applications or poor calibration of equipment. They’re easily controlled with 1.0 - 1.5 quarts 2, 4-D amine, if applied at the correct time. The first application should be done in late February-early March when the thistles are still in the rosette stage, lying flat on the ground. If you wait until April or May, once they start to perk up even a little, chemical control is diminished and you’re going to become one of those that think I’m crazy when I say that they’re easily controlled. A fall application in October-November may also be necessary. Take stock of what you’ve got in the fall, and if you’re still seeing a few thistles here and there, spray it again with the same chemical at the same rate. By this time, they will have laid back down flat.
So, back to the pasture conversation that has turned to thistles. The next thing I often hear is, “Well, what good is it going to do to control my thistles if my neighbor next door doesn’t?” I understand the frustration, but here’s the deal. You can’t control what your neighbor does. Also, pasture weed control is a beneficial enough of a management practice that folks probably just need to plan on it every year and maybe 2-3 times per year. If you’ve got enough acreage to worry about weed control, then you’ve got enough acreage to own or have access to a sprayer. Then, it doesn’t matter what your neighbor does. You can probably grow enough weeds on your own to justify spraying every spring without the help of your thistle-loving neighbor.

And, if you stumble across a way to market these thistles, let us all know.

Brad Runsick
Fulton Co. Extension
CEA-Agriculture/4H
870-895-3301
brunsick@uaex.edu