Whether your farm efforts involve livestock, forestry, vegetables, fruits, fish, or bees; 2015 looks good for the agriculture industry in Union County. Markets remain strong for red meats and poultry production is growing again. The forestry market is benefitting from recent economic growth, and new markets may emerge from alternative energy development. There is renewed interest in fresh vegetable production from low energy High Tunnels, community gardens, and traditional truck farms. Farmer’s Market interest and development in local communities continues to be important for the growth of the business. In each of these areas, leadership and cooperative effort are the keys to growing and maintaining the opportunities for young and veteran producers alike. The University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture Research and Extension Service is available to assist producers with not only research based information, but also skilled and caring professionals who can provide the knowledge and resources to assist individual producers and community leaders in their efforts to provide food and fiber to an ever demanding world population. Please contact the Union County Extension office (870-864-1916) if you need information or assistance.

Sincerely,

Robin D. Bridges
CEA/Staff Chair
Union County
PAT SCHEDULE FOR 2015

Union County Agriculture producers needing to re-certify or new producers needing to certify for the first time are encouraged to select one of these Pesticide Applicator Training dates to attend beginning in December.

- **Tuesday, January 13** 5:30-8:30 p.m. Union County Fairgrounds
- **Tuesday, February 10** 5:30-8:30 p.m. Union County Extension Office
- **Tuesday, March 10** 5:30-8:30 p.m. Union County Extension Office

MARKET REPORT CHANGING

Effective January 1, 2015 the Livestock & Grain Market News report which is published and released on Fridays will be changed to Mondays. With the current Friday's release date, the weekly summary consists of the livestock markets From Monday thru Thursday of the current week plus Friday of the previous week. With changing the release day to Monday, the livestock summary will consists of the livestock sales of a continuous week (Monday through Friday). At times, cattle prices changed dramatically from one week to the next. With moving the Livestock & Grain Market News Report to Mondays the report will capture a true Monday thru Friday week. This should narrow the price spreads for stocker and feeder cattle thus providing more accurate market information.

Tips for January

* January is the middle of the fall breeding season. Check bulls to be sure they are maintaining body condition and are still sound (feet, legs, eyes, and etc). If bulls seem to be disinterested, perhaps rotating bulls would be helpful.

* If the heifer breeding season began 30 days prior to the cow breeding season, the heifer breeding season should be coming to an end.

* Check body condition to determine if supplement feed needs to be adjusted.

* Provide free-choice mineral and fresh water.
**Tips for Spring Calving Herds:**

* Calving season may begin towards the end of this month or the first of next month. Be prepared for calving is very important: OB gloves, OB lubricant, esophageal feeder, bottle and nipple, chain straps/chains, calf puller, sterile syringes and needles, batteries for flashlight or spotlight, old rags or blankets, toolbox to keep calving equipment, colostrum replacement, electrolytes, etc. Make sure all items are in good working order, haven't expired, etc.

* Be prepared to make feed adjustments for nursing cows. Lactating cows require a 10-11% crude protein and 58-60% TDN diet MP391.

* Switch to a high magnesium mineral to help prevent grass tetany for lactating cows on spring pastures Fact Sheet.

* Castrate male calves at birth or at 3 months processing. Bull calves are usually discounted $5 per hundred weight. Castration early in life is less stressful on the calf. Research with calves castrated at birth grow at similar rates of gain compared to their intact male pasture mates. In addition, male calves castrated by stocker producers following salebarn purchase are 2.5 times more likely to become sick than a steer calf purchased through a salebarn market.

* Don't forget to collect calving records. Valuable records for selection and management include: body condition calving, calving difficulty score, calf gender, calf birth weight, and don't forget to tag calves - records are less valuable when they cannot be linked to animals and herds.

* If heifers were breed 30 days prior to the cow herd last year, the heifer calving season should be in full swing.

  * Vaccinate replacement heifers 30 to 60 days before breeding season.

* Now is a good time to evaluate and select sires for the spring breeding season for both mature cows and replacement heifers. Easy calving bulls are very important for breeding replacement heifers.

  * Provide free-choice mineral and fresh water.

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**Hay Management**

* Protect hay when feeding to reduce waste. Feed hay in rings to reduce hay waste. Unrolling hay increases hay waste unless it is done on a limit-feeding basis.

* Consider using a temporary electric wire fence wire to reduce waste from trampling and increases utilization of the hay.

  * Unroll the bale, then string up an electrified polywire down the length of the line of hay.
    * Place the wire about 30 inches high over the hay.
  
    * Cattle will line up as if eating at a feed bunk.

* Feeding hay in various locations around a field is a cost effective way of maintaining, or possibly increasing soil P, K, and organic matter.

  * Each bale of hay contains substantial amounts of fertilizer nutrients and can enrich feeding areas.
  
  * On average, a typical 4x5 round bale has a fertility value approaching that of 100 lbs of 17-17-17 fertilizer. ~
Breeding season is just around the corner for producers whose cows calved in the spring, and it is never too late to start planning. Improvement of next year’s calf crop is dependent upon the breeding decisions you are about to make. Males account for approximately 90 percent of the gene pool, contributing more to the genetic makeup of a herd in one breeding season than a cow contributes in her lifetime. Selecting genetically superior sires is the fastest approach to herd improvement and ultimately bottom line profitability. For those of you who already have a bull in place, remember that breeding success depends on the reproductive health of both the cow and the bull. However, because a bull is expected to service various numbers of cows, the potential fertility of the bull is much more important than determining the fertility of any individual cow. It is consequently essential to evaluate bulls every year before breeding starts because the fertility of a bull can vary from year to year. The breeding soundness exam should be performed 30 to 60 days before the start of breeding season. It is important to allow sufficient time to replace questionable bulls. This time allotment will also allow for enough time for stressed animals to recover and be tested again before the beginning of the breeding season.
FORESTRY LANDOWNERS

U. S. SOUTH TIMBER MARKET OUTLOOK

The last few months have brought positive news in the way of macroeconomic data. The latest revision of 2Q2014 GDP growth is at +4.2%, a slight increase from the previous estimate. Industrial production rose 0.4% in July, marking the sixth consecutive monthly gain. Manufacturing followed suit by increasing 1.0%, the largest increase since February. Total housing starts jumped to 1.093 million units SAAR, which is only 1.1% shy of last November’s peak rate.

Although this past quarter has been positive, the fundamentals have not changed. We anticipate the economy to grow at an average of 2.0% through the end of 2015. This growth will gradually slow and end with the beginnings of a recession in the second half of 2016. Oil prices will trade sideways through mid-2015, with volatility picking up as the economy slows. Housing starts will continue to improve, peaking in mid-2015.

With housing starts trending upward well into 2015, pine saw timber and chip-n-saw prices will mimic housing starts, peaking in late 2015, until growth begins to dissipate in 2016. Winter inventory building is underway and pulpwod prices will rise in the near term. Although as housing starts continue to rebound throughout 2015 overall pulpwod prices will suffer due to increased residual chip levels from saw timber harvests.

HORSE FEEDING MANAGEMENT 101

DR. MARK RUSSELL
EQUINE SPECIALIST

When determining the feeding program for your horse herd, there are many factors that can affect the type and amount of feed to use. As a general rule of thumb, consult your local veterinarian if at any time your horse shows a lack of appetite or upset stomach. As we all know, horses have much more sensitive stomachs than that of other livestock. The University of Arkansas-Division of Agriculture has put together some basic points to keep in mind when feeding horses.

Feed at regular times (at least twice daily) with three daily feedings preferred. Research has shown that horses that are fed 2-3 smaller feedings, will digest feed more successfully. Any feed changes should be made gradually over a period of 7 to 10 days. When making a feeding change, start with only a very small amount. A general rule of thumb is to begin with only a handful and work your way up over a 10 day process. Changes in the rate of feeding should not exceed one pound per day for each horse. Horses that are fed on a consistent schedule are less likely to go off their feed or develop undesirable stall habits (vices). Horses that are fed on inconsistent schedules may get hungry and bolt to their feed, possibly resulting in digestive disorders.

Feed along with at least 1-1.5% of horse’s body weight of good quality hay of the equivalent in pasture to make a complete ration.

Have plenty of fresh, clean water available at all times. Horses will typically drink less water during the winter, thus it is imperative to ensure that water troughs are kept clean, especially during the winter. Troughs should be emptied and scrubbed twice a week at a minimum.

Prevent the rapid eating by the horse of any feed stuffs. Horses have the tendency of eating much faster than their stomachs can digest. It is crucial to maintain consistent feeding times and amounts to ensure that rapid eating does not take place.
All meetings and activities announced in this newsletter are open to all eligible persons without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, disability, marital or veteran status, or any other legally protected status. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (large print, audiotapes, etc.) should notify the county Extension Office as soon as possible prior to the activity.