The Aftermath of the Drought—What Now?

Well, the dust has settled and the rains have come this spring to assist in relief of our drought conditions for livestock producers.

The drought of 2012-13 has been a monumental event in our national, state, and local agricultural world resulting in issues farmers will deal with over the next few years. One issue is going to be pasture and hay management such as weed control, partial renovation, and even full renovation. Soil testing is one program that we always advise producers to conduct for pastures and hayfields. A good soil fertility program may not seem important when there is no moisture to help activate the fertilizer. But, we cannot be afraid due to last year’s drought to put out necessary fertilizer. When moisture does come available to assist in proper plant growth, the fertilizer will help the grass stand compete with the weeds.

Now, the second issue is the weeds that are in your pastures. Weeds can consume a majority of the fertility in pastures and hayfields by choking out the desirable grass. Weeds that are going to be abundant are going to fall into two broad categories – winter weeds and summer weeds. We will have both to contend with and more than likely you will have some type of weed in your pastures that you have not had before due to the bare ground we have seen in overgrazed pastures. It is time to get geared up and prepare for summer weed control by the middle of May and first of June. Winter weeds will have to wait until fall or next winter to be sprayed to do a good job of controlling them.

From recent observation in our local area, there has been more grass that has recovered from the drought than previously predicted. I have seen some thin stands of grass that with weed control and a good planned fertility program could pull out of this drought with full recovery, with the existing forage and the seed bank in the soil if the grass stand has been there for a significant length of time. Especially on cool season grasses with proper weed control (winter and summer), this could be an opportunity to establish some clover or other legumes into a thin stand of fescue.

Timely Tips to Help in Drought Recovery:

- Soil test pastures for proper soil fertility to match production needs.
- Evaluate pastures for desirable forages and pesky weeds.
- Manage grazing by limit grazing recovering pastures and rotating cattle through fields, just close gates.
- After proper weed control, add desirable forages such as clovers in cool-season grasses in the fall.
- Fertilize desirable forages to match the growing time. – Fertilize warm season grasses when night temps are above 60˚ F for a week.
- Now is the time to plant warm season forages if needed.
- Plan your fall pasture renovation program now.

Scout Pastures and Hayfields for True Armyworms

Producers need to be on the lookout for the True Armyworm that comes in the spring of the year. True Armyworms were reported last week in a fescue field in southeast Searcy County. So be aware of the possibility and be scouting your pastures and hayfields on a regular basis. True armyworms primarily feed at night and remain hidden in ground litter by day (so be sure and look in the ground litter and thatch). They feed on a variety of forage crops but fescue, oats, rye, wheat and other cool-season grasses are the major forage concerns. This is because these forages are actively growing in the spring when true armyworms are most active. Examine at least 10 one sq. ft. samples at random across the field. Female armyworm moths prefer to lay eggs in areas of abundant growth, be sure to include a few of these areas in your 10 samples. Producers should carefully examine grass blades, stems and organic debris at plant base, and soil surface in a 1 sq. ft. area. Chemical control is usually needed when 3 or more worms per square foot are found. Read label instructions and follow harvesting and grazing restrictions. A 1 sq. ft. sampling device made of stiff wire or PVC pipe will make the sampling process much easier. For more information on control of armyworms, call the Van Buren County Extension office at (501)745-7117.
Making Hay While the Sun Shines

Remember that no one really knows the weather and that when producing forage “make hay while the sun shines” as the old saying goes. Take this motto to heart. Don’t wait too long in the year to fertilize and get some summer grazing or hay production. Fertilization of summer grasses, especially bermudagrass, is first done when our night temps are above 60˚ F for one week. This allows the soil temperature to warm up where the warm-season forages will be actively growing to efficiently use the fertilizer. Do not wait until June or July to decide you should have fertilized to get a grazing or hay crop because you may miss the better rain opportunities. If we keep active weather patterns with chances of rain, you need to get the fertilizer on the field where it can be used when the rain comes.

Stocking Rates for Rebuilding Herds: How Many can I Economically Maintain?

Stocking rate is another issue that most producers need to look at during the time of pasture renovation and in some cases herd rebuilding. Stocking rate is the number of head that a piece of land is capable of carrying throughout the entire year. Producers need to look at stocking rates and be careful not to overstock newly established or recovering stands of forages. Stocking rate is something that is hard to put an overall general recommendation on due to size of animals, land capability, forage production levels, and many other variables. Stocking rate predictions could be taken from years of good records that have been kept on grazing and cattle production on the farm. Proper stocking rates that allow you to graze more and produce less hay to have a 65 day or less hay feeding season could help you be more profitable. Some seasons of the year, you may have more forage than you need and this forage then can be utilized for hay. If it is during the calf weaning time of the year, it may be profitable to wean the calves and graze them for a period of time on the extra forage. Remember, just because a piece of land can be managed to carry high levels of livestock doesn’t mean that it is profitable.

Fly Control on Livestock

Fly control on livestock is a serious issue when you think about livestock production and efficiency. Aggravating flies can reduce milk production and lower weight gains in livestock. As a livestock producer you need to be weighing your fly control options now. Cattle producers have options of sprays, dusts, pour-ons, rubs, and ear tags. When using any type of insect control, make sure to rotate products and use products according to label to be sure not to reduce effectiveness of the products available. For more information on fly control for your livestock call the Van Buren County Extension office.

Arkansas Works to Stay Ahead of a Fruit-Robbing Fly!

A tiny fly may be the greatest threat that cobbler season in Arkansas has ever faced.

The spotted wing drosophila (pronounced druh-SOFF-ih-luh), or SWD, was first trapped in Arkansas last year in Johnson, Washington, and White counties. Unlike more common fruit flies that eat decaying fruit that's fallen on the ground, the SWD lay eggs in soft-skinned fruits and the larvae that hatch then eat the fruits, damaging crops to the tune of millions of dollars each year. Among drosophila's favorite targets are blackberries, raspberries, strawberries, and cherries; they have also been found in peaches, plums, and grapes, and sometimes tomatoes and melons. Donn Johnson, Extension Entomologist with the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, is leading efforts to combat the minuscule invader. "We at least know it's in the state, but we're not sure exactly what kind of numbers we'll see this year," said Johnson. "In other states, where they detected it in one year, they started seeing some damage the following year, especially in the fall with the maturing crop. We're trying to prepare the growers in case it appears in late summer or fall." Trapping is the first step in determining where the SWD is growing in number, and Johnson said the traps are very simple; they use yeast and vinegar in a bucket that draws the flies in where they become stuck, and can then be identified and counted. Some growers had reservations about the traps, fearing the traps would draw the flies into their crop. Not so, says Johnson. Once fruit is ripening on plants, there's another method to test for SWD: Take a random sample of fruits you would eat and dunk them in a salt-water or sugar-water solution, and the larvae will float to the top, Johnson said. Once SWD has been identified, he said, the primary recourse is to spray. "Right now our only arsenal is really the insecticides," he said. "And there's a number of insecticides that we know are effective against the pest." Information on those pesticides, as well as fact sheets about the spotted wing drosophila and a presentation Johnson made on the fly are available free on the Extension Service website, www.UAEX.edu. He said podcasts about the fly are also being added to the website. Sherri Sanders, White County extension agent for the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, said that traps are being monitored in vineyards, orchards, and strawberry fields in her area. To date this year, the news has been good. "Growers are trapping on a weekly basis," said Sanders. "We've had zero so far. We found a related bug, but not the spotted wing drosophila." What should concerned farmers do? Contact their local extension agent for a start, said Johnson. For more information about entomology, visit extension's Web site, www.uaex.edu, or contact your County Extension Agent.
Did You Know . . .

- 4-H members are 50% less likely than non 4-H members to smoke cigarettes, shoplift, or use illegal drugs.
- 4-H members are 20% more likely to hold a leadership position in their school or community than non 4-H members.
- 4-H members are 24% more likely to get involved in projects that “help others” than are non 4-H members.
- 40% of 4-H alumni have completed a college degree, compared to 28% nationwide.
- 4-H is for a young person who wants to go places, do interesting things, learn new skills, make new friends and have fun.

Do You know a Youth that participated in County O-Rama?


4-H Membership:

4-H Membership is a requirement for any youth starting at age five and going through 8th grade of school to be able to exhibit as a junior exhibitor in the county, district, and state fairs. The final date that you can enroll for the 2013 4-H membership year to be registered and allowed to show in the Arkansas State Fair will be July 8. You will have to enroll by this time so your 4-H forms can be signed to certify you as a county 4-H member enrolled in a project. Youth showing just in the county and district fair have until August 28, 2013. The state will reset the enrollment program to begin 2014 enrolling on September 1. On this date you will no longer be able to enroll in 4-H for 2013. You need to check your status on the online enrollment program and it should indicate that each child is active for the 2012-2013 year. If you have friends or family that need to be enrolled to show, we ask that you pass this info onto them. Since they are not current members, they will not receive 4-H information via newsletters or emails. For more information on enrolling, you can call or come the Van Buren County Extension office.

T-Shirts Galore: Do you have tons of t-shirts and cannot bring yourself to throw them away? I have a project for you. Come join me on June 3, 2013 from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. This project is appropriate for youth or adults who wish to recycle their favorite shirts. If you are new to sewing, we will learn and practice basic sewing skills such as threading the sewing machine, cutting, pinning, pressing and of course sewing. Bring 12-24 t-shirts that are in fairly good shape and have logos or have been screen printed with a design. We will be making a blanket/throw using the t-shirts. The second session will be June 17, 2013. This may take more than one session because we only have two machines. Please call the Extension Office at 501-745-7117 to reserve a place in the workshop. I will reserve a room appropriate to the number of participants.

Who can join? Anyone age 5-19 can join 4-H. In Arkansas, youth can participate in the 4-H program in three age levels. They are: Cloverbuds-5-8 Junior-9-13 Senior-14-19

Van Buren County 4-H

The Arkansas Procurement Assistance Center (APAC) mission is to provide training and resources that help Arkansas businesses generate revenues and thereby create or retain jobs for Arkansans through effective government contracting. The Center was established in 1988 as an offshoot of the Entrepreneurial Services Center operated by the University of Arkansas, with funding from the Job Training Partnership Act Title III program. APAC served 250 clients statewide in those days, resulting in 111 contracts for $7,001,000, creating or retaining 133 jobs. Its purpose was to provide government contract assistance and education to the businesses of Arkansas. The Center is an economic development program of the Community and Economic Development Program Area of the Cooperative Extension Service. We serve Arkansas businesses in all 75 counties at no charge. The County Extension Staff Chairs in each county help to connect the program to the local community. The APAC Office is housed in the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service office in Little Rock and is open to the public 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, and counseling is done by appointment.
The Southside Health and Safety Fair was held on Tuesday, April 16, 2013, at the Southside High School Gym. MyPlate and Germ City were presented at this event. Kindergarten through twelfth grades attended. 4-H and SNAP Ed volunteers demonstrated healthy eating habits and good hand washing practices.

The Clinton Health and Safety Fair was held on Friday, April 26, 2013 at the Intermediate Gym starting at 8:00 am and lasting till 2:00 PM. MyPlate and Germ City were presented at this event.

The Van Buren County Extension office promoted MyPlate as well as Germ City. Through these exhibits, students observed County FCS Agent and volunteers demonstrating correct portion sizes and answered questions about Healthy eating habits as well as safe hand washing practices.

Shirley Elementary hosted Germ City Tuesday, May 7, 2013 at the Elementary Gym between 8 AM to 12 PM. Students and Faculty that attended thoroughly enjoyed the program and were excited to see the results of good hand washing practices.

Students and Faculty participated in the Germ City demonstration by putting Glo Germ lotion on their hands then walking into the Germ City tent to look for germs. Then, they washed their hands and went back inside Germ City to see if all the germs came off. Parents were encouraged to attend and many that visited this event were surprised to find out the correct portion sizes for children and the amount of germs left after hand washing. The faculty was very excited to volunteer to help teach students the importance of eating healthy and good hand washing practices.

**4-H Youth Volunteer Leaders**

4-H youth find many ways to volunteer in their community and world. This year 4-H clubs rallied together with Extension Homemakers and other county individuals to collect pop-tabs for the Ronald McDonald House. 4-H member, Brooke D. and volunteer leader, Felicia Davenport presented 15 lbs of pop tabs to Ronald McDonald House Charities of Arkansas. 4-H Volunteer Leaders planned club meetings and educational activities for the 4-H Youth in their clubs. Brooklyn S. and Jordan Y. from South Side 4-H, Austin D. - Shirley 4-H, and Kaitlin R. - Razorback Rascals assisted with 4-H Camps by leading activities, demonstrating, and assisting the agents. Recently, Austin D. presented Bicycle Safety to the Clinton 5th grade classes from the Healthy Lifestyle Choices Program. The students learned the importance of wearing a bicycle helmet and following the Rules of the Road. Austin demonstrated the proper hand signals and how to check the bicycle to ensure it is safe to ride. 4-H Volunteer Leader, Ginger Griffin, and 4-H members assisted by demonstrating the proper fit of the helmet and bicycle. Regina Chaney, County Extension Agent, quizzed the students to determine their understanding and how they would apply bicycle safety to their life. Other lessons were presented on preventing injuries, consequences of actions, car safety. ATV Safety was taught in conjunction with the Safety unit at Clinton Intermediate School, Shirley Elementary, and South Side Elementary. Fifth grade students received hands on training. Brad Runsick, Fulton County Extension Agent demonstrated the importance of wearing the proper gear and following safety precautions when riding an ATV. Students then demonstrated the proper safety gear that should be worn.

**4-H Volunteers Needed:** This summer Van Buren County is seeking Senior 4-H Youth Volunteers and 4-H Adult Volunteers to assist with camps. If you would like to take pictures, present a talk, demonstration, or just help prepare snacks and lead games, contact the Van Buren County Extension Office.
Arkansas boasts some of the most beautiful and bountiful lakes, rivers and streams in the country, and fishing is one of our favorite pastimes. Another favorite pastime is eating fish, and judging from the fish-fry parties and trout recipes, Arkansans know how to prepare the catch of the day.

"Fish in general is a good choice for a healthy diet because it is low in fat and helps keep cholesterol levels in check," says Dr. Russ Kennedy, Health and Aging Specialist with the U of A Cooperative Extension Service. "Lately there have been some concerns about eating fish caught in Arkansas lakes and streams because of mercury poisoning. However, understanding what is safe and what is not will help minimize any risk that mercury contamination may cause."

According to the Food and Drug Administration, pregnant women or women who plan to become pregnant should avoid eating fish such as swordfish, shark, tilefish and king mackerel because of higher concentrations of mercury. However, low-mercury fish such as shrimp, farm-raised catfish and trout, and crawfish are healthy options to try.

"If you have concerns," Kennedy says. "The best thing to do if you catch fish in Arkansas waters is to check with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, the Arkansas Department of Health or the Environmental Protection Agency to see if there are any fish consumption notices. In general, the smaller the fish, the fewer the contaminants in the flesh so the fewer you will consume."

Certain types of fish, such as bream, crappie, buffalo, channel catfish and red horse/sucker, have the least amount of mercury in their systems because they don’t eat other fish, which may contain more mercury. These types are safer to consume than fish such as bass, gar, bowfin, and blue and flathead catfish because these fish build up more mercury in their systems by eating other fish with mercury contaminates.

For more information about health, safety and nutrition, visit extension's Web site, www.uaex.edu, or contact your county FCS Extension Agent Regina Chaney (501) 745-7117.

Food Safety Hot Topics: Cook the Catch of the Day with Caution

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A Note About Your Eyes

Are you holding the newspaper farther away from your eyes than you used to? Join the crowd ~ Age can bring changes that affect your eyesight. Some changes are more serious than others, but for many problems there are things you can do to protect your vision.

The first step is to have your eyes checked regularly by an eye care professional, either an ophthalmologist or optometrist. People over age 65 should have yearly eye exams. During this exam, the eye care professional should put drops in your eyes that will widen, or also called dilate, your pupils so that he or she can look at your inner eye. This is the only way to see some common eye diseases that have no early signs or symptoms. If you wear glasses, your prescription should be checked also.

See your doctor regularly to check for diseases like diabetes and high blood pressure. These diseases can cause eye problems if not treated.

See an eye care professional right away if you:
- Suddenly cannot see or everything looks dim,
- You see flashes of light,
- You have eye pain,
- You experience double vision, or
- You have redness or swelling of your eye or eyelid.

Protect your eyes from too much sunlight by wearing sunglasses that block ultraviolet (UV) radiation and a hat with a wide brim when you are outside. For more information you can visit the National Eye Institute at www.nei.nih.gov or Extension at www.uaex.edu

Food Safety Hot Topics: Enjoy Memorial Day But Cook out Safely

Can anything be better than cooking outside for Memorial Day? Barbequeing seems to be an all-American activity suited for the holiday. It’s also appropriate on any warm weekend. Be careful operating the grill and be aware of food safety issues or you could be making an unscheduled trip to a doctor’s office or hospital, warns Dr. John Marcy, professor-extension poultry processing specialist with the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service.

Marcy, who conducts the annual 4-H barbeque cooking contest at the Arkansas State Fair, said food safety and grill safety are the main concerns as you throw on the meat to cook. "Before you crank up the grill, be aware of the condition of the equipment," he said. Here are additional tips:

- With a gas grill, make sure no spider webs are blocking the jets.
- Make sure all gas line connections are tight.
- Make sure the equipment is operating at a safe distance from any structure.
- If you light a gas grill manually, stand as far back as you can, and be careful!

NEVER use gasoline.

Marcy said an inexpensive "charcoal chimney" device with newspaper as the fuel can be more effective than lighter fluid in starting a fire, and "people always have newspapers around." Pre-soaked charcoal is another good option to using a flammable liquid.

Food safety is also a concern, said Marcy, a food safety expert. "The main thing is not to get the fire too hot so you don’t get the outside cooked before the inside," he said. "If you cook the meat slower and longer you’ll get a better product." Cook food to a safe minimum internal temperature to destroy harmful bacteria, Marcy said.

Use a food thermometer to be sure the food has reached a safe minimum internal temperature. Beef, veal, and lamb steaks, roasts and chops can be cooked to 145 degrees, but hamburgers made of ground beef should reach 160 degrees for 15 seconds to ensure safety. All cuts of pork should reach 160 degrees. All poultry should reach a minimum of 165 degrees for safety. You can heat boned chicken to 180 degrees to get the red out.

Food safety also means taking precautions in the kitchen. "Be sure there are plenty of clean utensils and platters." Marcy said. "To prevent food-borne illness, don’t use the same platter and utensils for raw and cooked meat and poultry and vegetables. Harmful bacteria are present in raw meat and poultry, and their juices can contaminate safely cooked food."

"The other big thing is cooling," Marcy said. "Any cooked food left outside for up to four hours is probably ok. But don’t try to refrigerate it for the next day. For leftovers, refrigerate within an hour."

For more information about food safety, contact your county extension agent or visit www.uaex.edu and select Health and Nutrition, then food safety. The Cooperative Extension Service is part of the U of A Division of Agriculture.
Van Buren Extension Homemakers held their Spring Meeting at Western Sizzlin on April 16th. The theme of the meeting was Endless Gardening hosted by Chimes EH Club. Regina Chaney, County Extension Agent, provided information on ways to make gardening accessible for all with tools made to make gardening easier for individuals as they become older. Brochures showing gardening tips and recipes were provided for the members. Deborah Jones, President, installed the officers for the 2013-2015 term. The officers are President, Patty Munson; Vice President, Mary Hyman (not present); Secretary-Earlene Brecheen and Treasurer, Viola Scott. Each club made gardening centerpieces. Members received them at the end of the meeting to take home. Regina Chaney provided gardening tools for door prizes.

**Strawberry Vinegar**

2 cups fresh strawberries  
3 cups cider vinegar  
¼ cup sugar  
Clean strawberries, remove stems and halve; set ¼ cup aside. Place remaining strawberries in a large bowl (preferably glass). Pour vinegar over strawberries, cover and set aside for 1 hour. Transfer vinegar and strawberries to a large saucepot. Add sugar and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer, for 10 minutes. Strain mixture through a fine meshed sieve lined with cheesecloth into quart measure cup, pressing firmly on the solids to extract as much liquid as possible. Discard solids. Pour vinegar into a clean and sterilized quart jar. Add reserved strawberries. Seal tightly. Store in the refrigerator. Makes about 1 quart.

**Strawberry and Spinach Salad with Poppy Seed Dressing**

2 cups strawberries, sliced  
1 pound spinach leaves  
**Dressing**  
½ cup sugar  
¼ teaspoon Worcestershire sauce  
¼ cup strawberry vinegar  
1 tablespoon poppy seeds  
Heat the ingredients for the dressing until the sugar dissolves. Add the poppy seeds and cool. Toss dressing over strawberries and spinach.

**Baking to Benefit A Cause**

The Van Buren County Extension Homemakers spent hours baking up breads, pies, cakes and cookies to go toward a Nursing Scholarship and other volunteer activities that they support in the county. The County Extension Homemakers Clubs joined together in the effort to raise enough money to sponsor students in their endeavors to become nurses. On May 10, 2013, the members set up a booth at Thriftway Groceries and sold baked goods, plants, cookbooks, and quilt books.
Van Buren County Extension Office
1414 Hwy 65 S. ~ Suite 137
Clinton, Arkansas 72031

501-745-7117

Danny Griffin
County Extension Agent
Staff Chair

Regina Chaney
County Extension Agent
Family & Consumer Sciences

Marie Golden
Program Assistant - Youth

Kerri Jones
Administrative Support Supervisor

Sincerely,

Danny Griffin
County Extension Agent
Staff Chair

Regina Chaney
County Extension Agent
Family & Consumer Sciences

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.