



Johnston County Center

Livestock News

September 2026



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JOHNSTON COUNTY SHEEP & GOAT FIELD DAY

LOCATION:
Johnston County Livestock Arena
520 County Home Rd, Smithfield NC

DATE: NOVEMBER 7, 2026
TIME: 11:00 AM - 3:00 PM

FIELD DAY HIGHLIGHTS:

- Presentation by NCSU's **Dr. Andrew Weaver: Lambing & Kidding Toolbox**
- Practical **Demonstrations:** Hoof Trimming and Other Practices
- **Food Truck** On-Site
- **Local Vendors** and Supplies
- **Raffle Table** with a **Grand Prize**



NC STATE EXTENSION

Other Upcoming Events:

Sep 1 to Nov 25- Annual Fall Fruit & Nut Tree Sale. Order form and information at johnston.ces.ncsu.edu

Sep 10 at 6:30- Private Applicator's V Training/Safety Class. Ag Center Auditorium, Smithfield.

Oct 15 to 25- NC State Fair, Raleigh

Nov 20 from 5-8- Youth Livestock Festival Supper. Livestock Arena

Nov 21- Eastern Carolina Showmanship Circuit Banquet- Greenville

Nov 24- Farm City Week Banquet. Ag Center, Smithfield

Dec 15&16- Pesticide Safety School & Exam. Ag Center, Smithfield

Jan 19 at 6:30- Sheep & Goat Association Meeting. Ag Ctr, Smithfield

Feb 16 at 6:30- Cattlemen's Meeting. Livestock Arena, Smithfield

Mar 29 & 30- Youth Livestock Show & Sale. Livestock Arena, Smithfield

For any meeting listed, persons with disabilities may request accommodations to participate by contacting the Extension Office where the meeting will be held by phone, email, or in person at least 7 days prior to the event.

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Animal Waste - Upcoming Classes

By: Liz Joseph, Livestock & Field Crops Agent with N.C. Cooperative Extension in Moore County

In-Person Animal Waste Continuing Education Classes - 6 Hours

Date	Location	Time	To register, call or email:
December 3	Wayne County	9 am- 4 pm	919-705-1921
December 7	Lenoir County	9 am- 4 pm	252-560-6094 or kfm0hrfe@ncsu.edu
December 8	Duplin County	9 am- 4 pm	910-296-2143 or wanda_hargrove@ncsu.edu
December 9	Sampson County	9 am- 4 pm	910-592-7161 or max_knowles@ncsu.edu
December 9	Greene County	9 am- 4 pm	252-560-6094 or kfm0hrfe@ncsu.edu
December 16	Bladen County	9 am- 4 pm	910-862-4591 or becky_spearman@ncsu.edu

Initial 10-hour Animal Waste Operator Class (OIC)

There will be an initial class on October 26 and 27 in Moore County. Participants will be able to take the December exam. To sign up, use the following link <https://go.ncsu.edu/animalwasteoictraining2026> or contact Emi Bigford at emi_bigford@ncsu.edu or 910-576-6011.



Virtual Animal Waste Classes 3 hours each



<https://go.ncsu.edu/nov4oic>

**Nov 4, 2026
9-12**

**New & Emerging Waste
Technologies**



<https://go.ncsu.edu/nov19oic>

**Nov 19, 2026
1-4**

**Legislative Updates, Rodent Control &
Drone Applications
1 hour "X" pesticide**

Native Warm Season Grasses - More Drought Resistant & Less Fertilizer Needed

By: Brian Parrish, Livestock Agent with N.C. Cooperative Extension in Harnett County

Native warm season grasses are bunch grasses that are most productive during the warmer months of the year (April through mid-September). The many benefits of native warm season grasses include nutrition for livestock, high forage yield potential, drought resilience, and the wildlife habitat they provide.

Native Warm Season grasses can produce good yields with low nitrogen inputs as well. "In a recent three year study in Alabama, a mixture of big bluestem, little bluestem, and indiangrass was managed under continuous grazing as a system for developing beef replacement heifers. Pastures were grazed when grasses reached a target height of 20 inches. Over the three-year study there were no differences in seasonal forage production in this mixture when receiving 60 lbs of Nitrogen per acre or no nitrogen at Spring emergence. Average forage mass was 2,970 pounds of dry matter per acre. Beef heifer performance was 1.1 pounds per day of gain, with an average stocking rate of 855 pounds of animal body weight per acre. For Comparison, heifer average daily gain on other warm season perennial grasses adapted to the Southeast are often 1 to 1.5 pounds per day.

Disadvantages of Native Warm Season Grasses

1. Establishment of native grasses is slow and requires planning to be successful. The seed bed should be relatively grass and weed free prior to planting. There are also relatively few herbicides that can be used during establishment.
2. Native grasses are slow to emerge and establish.
3. They also require more attention to grazing management than some other more commonly used summer grasses. For example, (Native grasses in the study mentioned were grazed from 20 inches down to 15 inches.) This is a lot different than grazing down to 3 to 4 inches which is common with other grasses.

When these grasses are grown for hay, they can help producers save money on fertilizer costs. These grasses, once established have an incredible root volume that goes way down into the soil. These extensive, deep roots allow warm season grasses to perform and yield well even during drought periods. Some of the warm season grasses such as lowland switchgrass and gamagrass also grow well in areas that are too wet for hybrid bermudagrass. Having some of your forages in native warm season grasses could benefit your operation in times of drought and in times when fertilizer prices are high.

For more information on native grasses visit the Center for Native Grassland Management website at <https://nativegrasses.tennessee.edu/> There is also a good book on the subject "Native Grass Forages For the Eastern U.S." by Patrick Keyser <https://nativegrasses.tennessee.edu/native-grass-forages/>

References: Hay and Forage Grower April May 2022 "Cut nitrogen with native warm-season grasses"
Kim Mullenix and Landon Marks Alabama Cooperative Extension

Center for Native Grassland Management Website

Is It Worth the Trouble?

By: Dan Wells, Livestock Extension Agent with N.C. Cooperative Extension in Johnston County

"I don't have time. I don't have the facilities. I don't know how to do it. And it just isn't worth the trouble." These are all reasons why cattle producers do not precondition their calves before selling.

I am firmly convinced that preconditioning calves is the low-hanging fruit in the local commercial cattle industry. Last year, the participants in the Adding Value to Feeder Calves program averaged \$221 per head in premiums for their calves when sold at auction. That's over a thousand dollars for every five head! These are ordinary producers who do a good job of managing nutrition, reproduction and health, but took the added step to double vaccinate and wean their calves before selling. And they received assistance in castrating, tagging and vaccinating calves, and were provided a third-party affidavit of preconditioning to take wherever they chose to market their calves.

This put me on a path to analyze the difference in price for Value-Added and Non-Value-Added feeder calves in our local market. To do this, I accessed the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service historical data at ams.usda.gov/market-news/livestock-poultry-grain and downloaded all the 2025 cattle sales data for Powell Livestock here in my county. I sorted the data by age, sex, and whether or not the cattle were labeled as Value-Added. The results were pretty surprising. As the tables below reveal, premiums were almost entirely over \$200 per head in each class, with an exception in the 6-weight steers that could possibly be due to a lower number of animals in that range.

2025 Sales Figures, Powell Livestock Co. of Smithfield **Outlier data possibly due to low sample size.*

Weight Range	Bulls	Steers	VAD Steers	Premium of VAD over Non-VAD Steers	Premium of VAD Steers over Bulls
500-599	272.86/CWT 1494.91/Head	318.28/CWT 1729.28/Head	355.60/CWT 193.14/Head	213.85/Head	448.22/Head
600-699	251.64/CWT 1617.63/Head	301.09/CWT 1940.89/Head	311.34/CWT 1974.69/Head	33.80/Head*	357.07/Head
700-799	225.53/CWT 1672.00/Head	273.91/CWT 2022.00/Head	302.40/CWT 2228.92/Head	206.92/Head	556.92/Head

2025 Sales Figures, Powell Livestock Co. of Smithfield

Weight Range	Non-VAD Heifers	VAD Heifers	Premium of VAD over Non-VAD Heifers
500-599	262.35/CWT 1439.67/Head	310.41/CWT 1697.85/Head	258.17/Head
600-699	251.89/CWT 1624.18/Head	288.13/CWT 1860.31/Head	236.13/Head
700-799	234.82/CWT 1755.32/Head	269.13/CWT 1968.32/Head	213.00/Head

I realize that the cattle market is in high territory right now, even for calves that are not preconditioned. But why not capitalize on the opportunity to capture even more value during this time? Plus, develop your skills and your reputation now so that you can continue capturing value when the market shifts the other way.

If you don't know how to get started, that's where Extension can help. We can deliver hands-on training in these practices to help you get your cattle in the Value-Added column! In Johnston County, our Adding Value to Feeder Calves Program is in place to provide this training. We begin with an initial visit to discuss your goals and your operational timeline. Then you select your protocol to use to precondition your calves. I will attend when the calves are worked, assisting as needed and documenting the products and procedures. We also have some multi-dose syringes and other tools to help with the process. Upon completing the second round of vaccines, you will receive your official affidavit to present to buyers whenever and wherever you choose to market your calves. We also have JoCo Grows Value-Added ear tags available for \$2 each to help your animals stand out at the market. And we also offer low-cost corral and chute rent as low as \$25 per day-plus the rent is waived for your second round of calf vaccinations!

If you aren't in Johnston County, reach out to your local Livestock Agent. I chose to package a program around calf preconditioning because I firmly believe in its benefits, but all agents can help you be successful. Many counties now have portable cattle equipment, and agents are trained in Beef Quality Assurance, low-stress cattle handling and processing. The only thing you have to lose is value!

The Fence Line Effect: Why Small Ruminant Producers Should Pay Attention to Pasture Edges

By: Emi Bigford, Livestock Agent with N.C. Cooperative Extension in Montgomery County

If you've spent any time walking your pastures, you've probably noticed that your sheep and goats love to hang out right along the fence. They're always reaching through the wire for that "greener" grass on the other side, nibbling on brush at the edge of the woods, or just pacing the perimeter. It might look like they're just being curious, but those fence lines are actually where a lot of your biggest management headaches start.

Sheep and goats are natural foragers. Sheep like to graze low, while goats are more like deer. They want to browse on things higher up. Fence rows are a buffet for them because they usually have plants that don't grow in the middle of the field, like blackberry vines and young saplings. Many of these plants can provide valuable nutrition; it's also a major trap for parasites. Because the animals keep returning to the same spots along the fence, those areas become loaded with manure and parasite larvae. To keep your herd healthy, try to keep the grass from getting too short along the edges and keep them moving through rotational grazing.

There's also the risk of injury. We've all seen a goat get its head stuck in a fence because it was trying to reach a tasty leaf on the other side. If your fence wires are loose or the spacing is just the right size for a head to go in but not come out, you're looking at broken horns or worse. Check your fences regularly, not just to see if they'll hold the animals in, but to make sure they won't hurt them when they try to reach through.

Fence lines are also the "highway" for weeds. Birds sit on the fence posts and drop seeds, and when we turn the tractor around at the edge of the field, we often pack down the dirt and drop seeds from our tires. Since it's hard to mow right against the fence, these weeds get a chance to take over.

Nasty stuff like multiflora rose, poison hemlock, and pigweed usually starts right at the fence. If you don't catch them there, they'll eventually spread into the rest of your good pasture.

One of the best things you can do is take a walk along your fences in late summer, especially in September. If you can kill those weeds before they drop their seeds for next year, you'll save yourself a lot of money and work in the spring.

Don't forget about wildlife, either. Deer, coyotes, and raccoons love to travel along the edges of woods and fields. When your livestock are hanging out at the

fence line, they're often coming into contact with these wild animals or the germs they leave behind.

This is a big biosecurity risk. If your animals are touching noses with the neighbor's livestock through the fence or eating brush that wildlife has messed with, they increase the risk of exposure to parasites and certain infectious diseases through direct fence-line contact or shared environments. If you have a particularly high-risk boundary, consider a "double fence" or at least keep your water troughs and feeders well away from the property line to prevent diseases from jumping the fence.

After a big summer rain, those shady spots along the fence stay muddy much longer than the rest of the field. When your animals pace back and forth in that mud, it softens their hooves and lets bacteria in, which leads to foot scald and foot rot. If you have a spot that stays swampy, you might need to put down some gravel or landscape fabric near the gates, or just keep the animals out of that section until it dries out. Predators like coyotes and dogs use tall brush and tree lines to hide while they watch for a weak lamb or kid. If you keep your fence lines cleared and bush-hogged, you take away their hiding spots. Plus, it makes it a lot easier for you to see if something has been digging under the fence or if a wire has snapped before you lose an animal.

At the end of the day, one of the most valuable things you can do for your farm is just walk your perimeter once a month. It doesn't cost anything but your time, and it lets you catch small problems, like a loose wire, a patch of toxic weeds, or a muddy spot, before they turn into a huge vet bill.

You can't see the important details from the seat of a tractor or an ATV. By getting out and walking those edges, you'll keep your fences stronger, your grass better, and your animals a lot healthier.

Trailer Packing Tips for Horse Owners

By: Melissa Huffman, Livestock & Field Crops Agent with N.C. Cooperative Extension in Onslow County

Whether you are hauling horses 30 minutes or 8 hours, prepping for the trip takes a little time; and requires more than loading tack and hay. A properly packed horse trailer functions as a mobile emergency unit. Get ready to hit the road with your horses by following these basic packing tips.

1. **Vehicle & Trailer Mechanics:** Carry gear specifically rated for your loaded rig. This includes a trailer-specific jack or pull-up ramp (like a Trailer Aid), correctly inflated spare tires, a lug wrench that fits the trailer's specific lug nuts, wheel chocks, reflective safety triangles, and a basic tool kit (wire cutters, duct tape, extra fuses, zip ties).
2. **Equine First-Aid Kit:** Keep a dedicated kit in the tack room stocked with diagnostic tools. Note: Consult your veterinarian regarding prescription pain relievers (such as Banamine or Phenylbutazone) to carry for travel emergencies, and always note show association drug regulations if competing.

Category	Essential Items	Purpose
Diagnostic Tools	Rectal thermometer, stethoscope, headlamp	Monitoring vital signs (temperature, heart rate, gut sounds) during colic or distress.
Wound Care	Sterile saline wash, Betadine/ Chlorhexidine scrub, 4x4 gauze pads, Vetwrap, standing wraps	Cleaning, flushing, and securing lacerations or leg injuries.
Emergency Wraps	Disposable baby diapers, duct tape, leg quilts	Diapers and duct tape make excellent waterproof pressure bandages or temporary foot wraps for lost shoes/ abscesses.
Tools & Topicals	Bandage scissors, fly spray, triple antibiotic ointment, twitch	Cutting heavy wraps safely, preventing flies from landing on open wounds, and restraining an injured horse.

3. **Hydration & Extra Feed:** Pack 10 to 20 gallons of water from home, as horses often reject unfamiliar water sources on the road. Include sturdy rubber buckets with heavy-duty snaps, a fill hose, and extra hay or forage cubes packed beyond what is needed for the scheduled trip duration to handle highway delays.



4. **Documentation Folder:** Store a waterproof binder containing current Coggins test certificates, health papers (Certificates of Veterinary Inspection), brand inspection documents, horse identification photos, and a printed list of emergency contacts (your veterinarian, destination info, and roadside assistance).

Dehydration: Another Option for Mortality

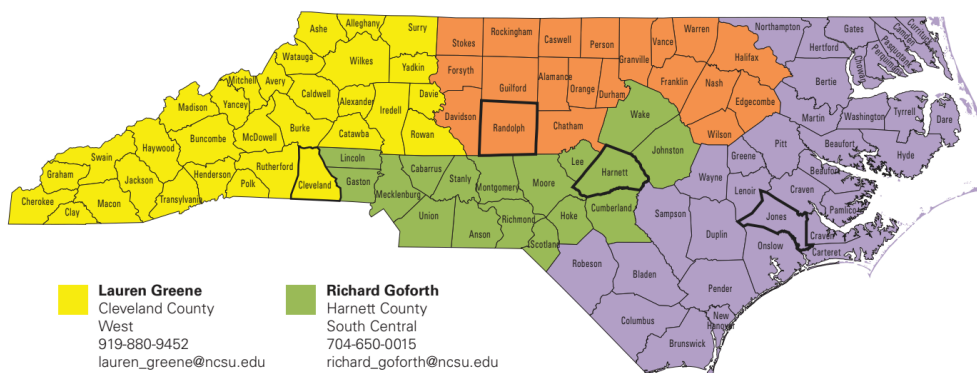
By: Richard Goforth, Area Specialized Poultry Agent in South Central N.C. with N.C. Cooperative Extension

Poultry producers have a new option for handling on farm mortality; dehydrators have been approved for use in NC by the state veterinarian. The guidelines for locating and operating a dehydrator are similar to those for compost systems and can be found here on the NCDA&CS website. <https://www.ncagr.gov/divisions/Veterinary/Poultry-Thermal-Dehydrator-Approval-Guidelines/open> The use of these systems has also been adopted by NRCS and NC Soil & Water districts as a mortality option for their cost share programs.

Dehydrators work by removing the moisture from the poultry carcasses with heat and agitation, reducing the volume by as much as 70 percent. There are both electric and gas heated units on the market, gas units still require electrical hook ups for the controls and mixing operations. Dehydrators tumble or mix the mortality while heat is being applied to breakdown the carcasses and to improve the drying efficiency. The end result is a concentrated nutrient product that resembles a crumble feed. The end product can then be mixed and land applied with litter as a fertilizer. There are potential uses for further rendering or energy generation, but that would require conglomerating large volumes and transportation.

Like all methods of mortality disposal there are pros and cons to each system that should be considered to decide what makes the most sense for your farm. On the plus side dehydrators are relatively low labor, with most of the work involved in loading and unloading and moving the end product to storage, this can be reduced by purchasing units with auger or conveyor systems to unload. There is also no smoke or direct combustion like incineration so the systems components should last longer. Volume reduction is much greater than with composting systems and the dry product should be easier to move and spread. On the negative side the systems can be pricey upfront and like incineration require electricity or gas for fuel. These systems are designed to operate on a timed cycle based on pounds and dryness desired. This means you cannot add mortality during a cycle, and most have a minimum load as well; which may require growers to hold mortality for a few days at the beginning when pounds are low or end of flock cycles with large birds. It also limits your ability to handle unexpected high mortality in a disease situation. Like all systems sizing of the unit or units is critical to ensure these issues are kept to a minimum or that there is an alternative disposal system that can be utilized during high and low volume situations. This article <https://www.aces.edu/blog/topics/farm-management/mortality-disposal-methods-for-commercial-poultry-growers/> does a pretty good job of discussing the pros and cons for several mortality methods and has a calculator to compare the operational cost. For additional information or questions on poultry mortality disposal methods in NC please consult with your Area Specialized Agent for poultry you can find your agent and their contact info at <http://go.ncsu.edu/Extension-ASA-Maps> or contact your county office.

Area Specialized Agents POULTRY



Our hands-on program gives you the tools, expert training, and third-party verification required to prove your cattle's premium quality and maximize your market return.

+\$213

AVG. STEER PREMIUM

Per Head (500-599 lbs)

+\$258

AVG. HEIFER PREMIUM

Per Head (500-599 lbs)

<\$12

PROTOCOL COST

Typical Cost Per Head

Market data from Powell Livestock (Smithfield, NC, 2025) for value-added vs. standard calves.

WHAT WE PROVIDE

- **Training:** We can help you castrate, prepare vaccines and administer products according to BQA guidelines.
- **On-Farm Weighing:** Get accurate, official weights taken right at your facility to track rate of gain.
- **Third-Party Verification:** Independent validation of health records. Multi-dose syringes and other tools are also available to help the process.
- **Official Affidavit:** A certified documentation of all treatments to accompany your calves to market.

EQUIPMENT & SUPPLIES

Handling Equipment Rental

Utilize professional setups without the high capital investment:

- Portable Corrals & Squeeze Chutes
As low as \$25/ day

**BOOSTER PERK: Rental fees are completely
WAIVED for your second round of vaccines!**

- **JoCo Grows Ear Tags:** High-visibility, value-added tags available **at cost** to make your cattle stand out instantly in the ring.



HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

A seamless, step-by-step process designed around your farm's schedule:

1 Initial Consultation

Contact Livestock Agent Dan Wells to discuss your herd goals, products, and operational timeline.

2 Select Your Plan

Establish your preconditioning schedule and select the specific health protocols you will use.

3 On-Farm Verification

Dan will attend your farm when calves are worked to officially verify the products and procedures.

4 Market Certification

Upon completing the second round, receive your official affidavit to present to buyers whenever you choose to market.

Program Sponsor



Contact :

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dgwells@ncsu.edu

919-989-5380