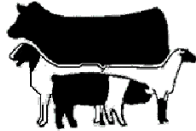


Bladen County Center

Livestock News

May 2026



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NC State Extension works in tandem with N.C. A&T State University, as well as federal, state and local governments, to form a strategic partnership known as N.C. Cooperative Extension.

Bladen Co. Livestock Association

Meetings will be at 7 pm. Topics and sponsors to be announced this fall.
RSVP by calling 910-862-4591 by Monday on the week of the meeting.

- October 15 - new date
- November 12
- December 10

Soil samples are free until 12/1/26.
Lagoon and litter samples increased to \$15/sample.

Upcoming Pesticide Classes

Begin with V credit at 4 pm and all other credits (N, O, D, X) at 6 pm. Call 910-862-4591 to register or email/text me.

- Aug 6th

Upcoming Youth Livestock and Poultry Events

- **Turkey Project:** Details will be out by the end of May. Youth will get turkeys in August and show in November. To request a registration form, call the office at 910-862-4591 or email Becky.
- **Skillathon, livestock judging, and poultry judging teams:** we are starting a new year for our teams. If you have youth ages, 9-18 who are interested in joining one of our teams, please email or call Becky.

Regional Chicken Project

We held our regional chicken show and harvest at the end of April. 90 kids from six counties showed in the show. Agents and volunteers processed 94 broilers and donated the meat to the Bladen Crisis Center. The birds were raised by five high schools (East Bladen, West Bladen, Grays Creek, Hobpton, and Hoke) and 4-H'ers. Congrats to the Bladen participants and winners!

**2026 Chicken Project
Bladen County Participants**

Cloverbuds:
Alex Wynn
Raylee Parnell
Victoria Parnell
Ella Frye

Juniors:
Nora Bridgers
Elisha Guyton

Seniors:
Trindle Beaver
Luke Bridgers
Caleb Parnell

Nora Bridgers -- 7th Junior Showmanship
Caleb Parnell -- 2nd Senior Showmanship and 3rd 4-H Recordbook
Luke Bridgers -- 2nd Senior 4-H Recordbook

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.

Disclaimer - The use of brand names and any mention or listing of commercial products or services does not imply endorsement by NC State University nor discrimination against similar products or services not mentioned.

Animal Waste Management Updates

By: Becky Spearman, Livestock Extension Agent with N.C. Cooperative Extension in Bladen County

Initial 10 - hour Animal Waste Operator Class (OIC)

There will be an initial class on July 13 and 14 in Lenoir County. Participants will be able to take the September exam. To sign up, call 252-560-6094 or email kfmohrfe@ncsu.edu. Cost to take the exam has increased to \$90. Details of the exam will be discussed in class.

****General Permits Extended to September 30, 2028** - date change**

This fall, the General Assembly passed Session Law 2025-97 which extended the expiration of the General Permits and the Certificates of Coverage until September 30, 2028 for permitted animal feeding operations. This means you are still on the 2019 general permit regulations. This is for swine, cattle, wet poultry, and digester operations that are on the general permit. This is a date change from a 2024 session law.

Traveling Gun Nozzle Demonstration and Calibration

By Dr. Mahmoud Sharara, NC State University Biological and Ag Engineering Department

North Carolina's lagoon-and-sprayfield system performs best when application decisions are grounded in two principles that producers can control every day: [1] **equipment setup** and [2] **rate verification**. This new NC State Extension virtual-tour series, funded by an NC Extension Innovation grant, walks you through the practical steps to ensure irrigation is not a disposal task, but a nutrient management operation focused on uniformity, accuracy, and documentation. This month, we will look at applying lagoon supernatant (liquid top layer in the lagoon) using a traveling gun. The drag-hose system was discussed in the January newsletter.

Start with the outcome: uniformity and applied rate

The most costly errors in land application are often not immediately visible: uneven distribution, rates that drift over time, or assumptions about what was applied versus what actually reached the field. Irrigation should be treated as a rate-controlled application. That means the pattern, pressure, travel speed, and flow must be set intentionally and then verified in the field. In traveling guns, nozzle selection and operating pressure influence droplet size, throw distance, overlap, and wind sensitivity. These factors directly affect distribution uniformity across the spray area. Small setup choices translate into large differences in where nutrients end up. Standardizing nozzle selection and operating ranges across a farm simplifies training and improves consistency.

Turning "settings" into an application rate: The calibration module demonstrates, step-by-step, how Extension agents verify the actual application rate in field conditions.

This is accomplished by:

1. Measuring the nozzle opening diameter using a caliper
2. Checking pressure at the gun (not just at the pump) using a pitot tube gauge or a digital gauge
3. Flagging and measuring wetted radius and diameter with tape and flags
4. Verifying travel speed with simple field tools such as tape and stopwatch

These measurements are then used along manufacturer charts to determine flow rate and overlap (coverage). Choosing application time is also critical to avoid wind drift or odor-related issues during application.

Remember that calibration is not paperwork; it is steps that converts an "intended rate" into a documented, applied rate that supports nutrient management decisions and recordkeeping.

To learn more, check out the Traveling Gun Nozzle Demonstration (<https://youtu.be/0WYAcotVELE>) and Traveling Sprayer calibration (<https://youtu.be/1QT5tf60Alk>) on YouTube or contact your Extension Agent.

Pest Alert: Bermudagrass Stem Maggot

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

The **Bermudagrass Stem Maggot (BSM)** has emerged as a significant threat to forage production across the southeastern United States, including North Carolina. First identified in the region around 2010, this invasive fly primarily targets bermudagrass, often causing damage that hay producers mistake for drought stress or frost.

Life Cycle and Identification

The BSM completes its life cycle rapidly, especially during the peak of summer, with a generation occurring in as little as 12 to 21 days (Knutson & Mitchell, 2019).



(Fig. A)



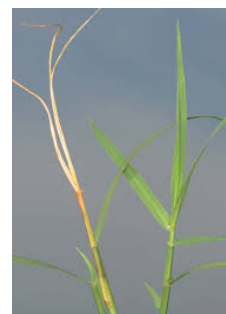
(Fig. B)

- **Adults:** Small, yellowish flies that are most active low in the grass canopy. (Figure A)
- **Eggs:** Deposited on the leaves or stems of the grass.
- **Larvae:** The damaging stage. Upon hatching, the larva tunnels into the stem above the uppermost node to feed on vascular tissue. (Figure B)
- **Pupation:** Occurs on the soil surface after the larva completes its development

Impact on Forage and Yield

The primary symptom of an infestation is "**bronzing**" or a frosted appearance of the field. Because the larvae feed internally on the terminal node, the top two or three leaves die while the rest of the plant remains green (Fig. C). The top "flag leaf" can easily be pulled out of the stem; at this point, the damage is already done.

- **Yield Loss:** Infestations can lead to a 7.7% to 10% decrease in total dry biomass, though in severe cases in neighboring states, damage has reached up to 80% of shoots. In 2025, in a few counties in southeastern NC, producers reported up to 50% yield decrease!
- **Forage Quality:** Damage is associated with increased fiber content (ADF) and reduced total digestible nutrients (TDN), though more research is needed to determine the exact extent of quality loss.
- **Economic Cost:** Untreated fields in the Southeast have faced production losses estimated at up to \$1,500 per hectare (Zessin, 2024).



Management Strategies

Integrated pest management (IPM) is essential for North Carolina growers to maintain productive hay fields.

- **Cultural control:** The most effective non-chemical strategy is harvest management. If damage is observed within one to two weeks of the scheduled harvest, it is often best to cut the grass early. Removing the crop eliminates the food source and disrupts the life cycle by exposing larvae to the sun.
- **Variety Selection:** Research indicates that cultivar choice significantly impacts damage levels. Fine-textured bermudagrass varieties (like Coastal) tend to be more susceptible than coarser varieties. Cultivar tolerance remains the most sustainable long-term IPM strategy.
- **Chemical Control:** If an infestation occurs early in the growth cycle (shortly after a previous cutting), chemical intervention may be necessary.
 - Pyrethroid insecticides are generally recommended and two applications are typically required. One application a few days after cutting and a second 5 to 7 days later to target emerging adults. It has also been noted that producers spray first thing in the morning before the dew dries on the grass for chemical applications to be most effective.

For more information on chemical control, reach out to our County Extension Agent. Stay tuned for research trial results!

Managing Beef Cattle Numbers During Drought Conditions

By: Kristi Welke, Livestock Extension Agent with N.C. Cooperative Extension in Jones, Craven, & Pamlico Counties

Is my grass able to keep up with the demand of my animals with the drought conditions? For those of us down east with warm season grasses we know it can take a pretty good beating and still come back. This seasonably early drought may have other ideas for the warm season grasses. You may be asking yourself what can I do to make it work for me this season? Do I adjust my grazing rotations? Do I change how I harvest my fields or pastures? How do I keep my pastures healthy and producing?

During times of drought when soil moisture is limited plant growth is significantly affected, especially those with cool-season grasses. Regrowth after grazing is delayed and there is also competition for different plant species. Stretching forage supplies, maintaining herd productivity and reducing feed costs should be at the top of the list to preserve your herd during drought conditions.

- Reduce your forage needs for the herd.
 - Start by culling animals
 - Identify unproductive females
 - Animals that have chronic health issues
 - Older less productive animals
 - Open heifers
- Reduce feeding losses
 - Use hay rings and feeders
- Stretch hay with supplementation
 - Add protein or energy supplements to assist in balancing a diet with lower quality forage
- Panning is key!
 - Soil sample and make sure your soil is healthy for productive forage growth
 - Store hay carefully
 - Timely culling
 - Rotational grazing
 - Graze through pastures sooner to allow ample foliage to remain and not add added stress to the plants
 - Warm Season grasses don't graze any lower than 4" during drought conditions

- Cool Season Grasses don't graze below 6" during drought conditions
- Have a sacrifice area for feeding hay where animals can be completely off resting forages

How do I decide which cows to keep and which animals to cull? Culling management is an important practice on each beef operation and needs to be considered during drought times. When culling animals you want to make sure you aren't wasting any resources on unproductive animals. Look over your records on each animal in making these decisions. Who are my priority animals to cull?

1. Pregnancy status- make sure all animals are bred and none are open.
2. Any defects- bad temperaments, eye issues, udder problems or animals with chronic lameness issues.
3. Age- Check the animal's teeth if you don't have any records on the animal's age. If the animal is not properly grazing and eating efficiently they are costing you resources and money.
4. Feet and legs- Cows must be structurally sound to efficiently get to water and food. Excessive hoof growth and toe curling are signs of structure unsoundness.
5. Udder Scores
6. Body Condition Scoring- Cows should maintain a BCS of between 5-7

These are some steps that can be taken to protect your pasture and herd health during drought conditions. Reach out to your local county extension office for more resources on keeping your herd productive during drought conditions.

Save Your Pasture: A Guide to Sacrifice Areas & Rotational Grazing for Horse Owners

By: Katie Horne, Livestock & Field Crops Agent with N.C. Cooperative Extension in Hoke County

Given the challenges of the current drought, it is the perfect time to discuss how sacrifice lots and rotational grazing can significantly improve pasture sustainability. These two management tools are vital to pasture success because continuous grazing often leads to overgrazing and compaction. Overgrazing destroys root systems and allows opportunistic weeds to take over, while wet periods bring the added risk of hooves compacting saturated soil and killing off desirable forage. Using both a sacrifice area and a rotational grazing system allows for plant regrowth, protects the health of your land, and guarantees long-term productivity in your pasture.

Sacrifice Areas

A sacrifice area is a designated section of land where animals are kept and fed. It is intentionally set aside for heavy use, so the rest of the pasture remains productive. In wet climates, this area prevents soil compaction, erosion and overgrazing in your primary grazing lands. Concentrating animal activity here creates a more efficient management plan for feeding and care while providing the foundation for a successful rotational grazing system. For the best results, choose a high, well-drained spot away from water sources that is reinforced with a durable surface, such as crushed gravel, to withstand constant traffic.

Rotational Grazing

Rotational grazing system offers great environmental benefits for horse pastures by dividing large fields into smaller paddocks and rotating horses through one pasture at a time while leaving the others empty. This ensures essential rest periods for the regrowth of vegetation. This method improves soil structure, increases organic matter, and enhances carbon sequestration (removal of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere), making the land more resilient to drought and unpredictable climate changes. Rotational systems, owners can reduce soil erosion, improve water quality, and naturally distribute manure which lowers fertilizer cost. Additionally, this management style lessens herd health problems by reducing parasite exposure. From a management perspective, rotational grazing maximizes high-quality forage production, lowering the costs associated with purchasing, transporting, and storing hay. For many horses, a well-managed pasture can meet or exceed their protein and energy requirements, reducing the need for expensive supplements. It is important to

keep track of the height of your grass. Start grazing at 6–10 inches and rotating out at 3–4 inches—owners can stockpile (accumulate) forage and extend the grazing season into the winter months. Although rotational grazing requires more oversight than traditional methods, it produces a highly productive, sustainable pasture that requires less frequent renovation and significantly improves the overall health of the farm.

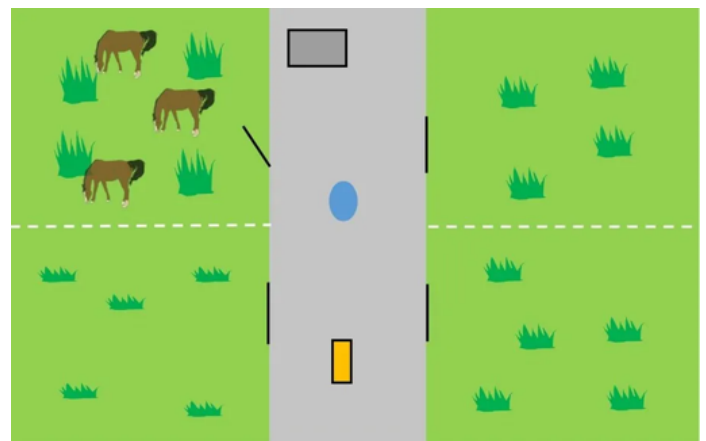
For more detailed information on implementing these strategies, please explore the resources below from **NC State Extension** and the **Center for Environmental Farming Systems**. These guides provide specific technical advice on stocking rates, height requirements, and effective field management:

<https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/pasture-grazing-heights-for-rotational-stocking>

<https://cropsoil.cals.ncsu.edu/Wordpress/forages/assets/grazingguide.pdf>

<https://cefs.ncsu.edu/resources/managing-pasture-rotational-grazing-overview/>

If you have any questions or would like more guidance on implementing rotational grazing, please don't hesitate to reach out to your local Livestock Agent.



Starting Small: Easy Housing & Facility Tips for the Small/Urban Sheep or Goat Farmer

By: Kimberly M. Web, Agriculture Agent with N.C. Cooperative Extension in Wake County

With increasing urbanization in many of our North Carolina counties, many new producers may think about adding small ruminants as an alternative to having large animals due to limited acres. Goats and sheep are a great option for the small farm because you can typically stock at higher numbers, allowing for 6-8 head of goats (or 5-6 sheep) per 2-3 acres of good quality pasture. Regardless of which small ruminant you choose the basic requirements for housing remain relatively the same. All small ruminants need proper fencing, shelter from extreme weather, equitable access to feed, and adequate access to water. While most facility requirements are similar, it is important to keep in mind if you are raising meat breeds as compared to dairy breeds that the latter generally require more shelter than those raised for meat, and appropriate facilities for milking and handling are necessary.

Proper fencing is essential to a successful sheep or goat enterprise. Having a solid perimeter fence which is permanent and surrounds the entire grazing area is recommended. The primary purpose of perimeter fencing is to keep the animal inside the pasture and keep predators out. Keep in mind that goats have a reputation for escaping so using woven wire or electric fencing is beneficial. Interior fencing can then be used to divide the larger pasture into smaller different paddocks for rotational grazing. Interior fencing can be temporary or semi-permanent and should be easy to move; polytape and polywire can be used for this purpose. If using electrified polywire fences some recommend utilizing at least 3000 volts to keep goats in and the use of barbed wire is not recommended.

Shelters for sheep and goats can be relatively simple and can be purchased or constructed from available materials. Typically, a three-sided shelter with an open side facing south is all that is needed with main considerations that there is proper ventilation and that areas under the shelter can remain dry. Housing at the rear of the building should be about 4 to 6 feet high, with front eaves at 6 to 8 feet high. Required space per animal can vary but a good rule of thumb is to provide 8 to 10 square feet per animal or 20 square feet per pair (mother and offspring).

Because goats are escape artists and like to jump and climb on everything, plywood roofing can be covered with shingles or other rough material, so that when the animals jump on top of them, they trim their own feet. But also remember to keep shelters away from fencing so that goats can't jump over the fence.

Feeders for hay and grain can again be constructed or purchased but the main consideration is that they should allow ample room for each animal. Make sure to provide enough feeder space for every animal some animals may get bullied away from food. Feeders should be easy to clean and move, and all feeders that are on the ground need to be kept dry and free of manure to reduce the risk of parasitism and bacterial infections. When working with horned animals, make sure they cannot get stuck in any feeders. Fresh, clean water should always be available to all animals. Very small flocks could use watering troughs or other containers whereas larger pastures often have water lines flowing to a central point at which an automatic waterer is installed. If you use an automatic waterer, just make sure the animals are able to access water during your rotational grazing set-up. Although buying and installing pasture waterers may cost more than using containers, they can save labor over the long haul.

Outside of the basic requirements for keeping small ruminants, additional equipment will likely include a way to transport the animals to and from the farm (truck and livestock trailer) and a small (40 to 55 horsepower) tractor which may be necessary for pasture maintenance and feeding hay. Sometimes having a bush hog that attaches to the tractor is also useful for pasture maintenance. A final reminder is that a healthy goat or sheep will be better able to withstand adverse weather, illness, or stressful conditions. Small ruminants with good body condition are better able to withstand many stressors without much problem if they have access to good quality forage and water.

The Forgotten Nutrient: Managing Water Quality for Poultry

By: Richard Goforth, Area Specialized Poultry Agents with N.C. Cooperative Extension

When was the last time you checked the quality of the water your birds drink? While many producers check their water when digging a new well or constructing new houses, for many, this is the last time they evaluate their source quality. Most growers understand the need to flush and clean drinker lines, and many utilize injection systems for sanitizing agents. However, few truly understand the quality of the water they are starting with.

The Dynamic Nature of Water

Understanding what is in your water is key to managing its use and delivery. It is vital to recognize that water quality is not static. Because groundwater is the primary source for most poultry operations, it is susceptible to environmental shifts. As the "universal solvent," water changes each time the water table fluctuates. Droughts, floods, and nearby construction can significantly impact both quality and quantity. New construction can change runoff patterns, increase impervious surfaces, and provide potential direct access to reservoirs via new wells. Even municipal water users may experience changes in taste, bird acceptance, or sanitizer performance when intake sources or treatment agents are switched.

Testing for Success: A Two-Part Approach

Comprehensive water management requires sampling for both dissolved minerals and bacteria. Your county health department typically provides bacteria testing for well water. The presence of bacteria at the wellhead often indicates issues with the well casing and requires immediate treatment and follow-up testing within the year.

Mineral testing, is provided by the NC Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services at a nominal \$10 fee.

Best Practices for Sampling

- To receive accurate results from the NCDA&CS lab, follow these specific steps:
- Use a clean, empty plastic soda or water bottle (remove the label).
- Rinse the bottle several times with the source water. Do not use soap.
- Fill the bottle to the very top, leaving no air space, and cap tightly.
- Label the bottle with a descriptive code matching your submission form.
- Send the sample to the lab promptly, or refrigerate if storage is necessary.

Impact Beyond the Bird

Water quality affects more than just bird performance; it has a significant impact on your equipment. Drinkers and cool cells may have different tolerances for contaminants than the birds themselves. Consult your equipment manufacturer for specific recommendations to maintain longevity and performance.

Resources: NCDA&CS submission forms and info: <https://www.ncagr.gov/divisions/agronomic-services/solution-analysis>

A comprehensive look at water quality in poultry, check out "Do you know your water Quality" at poultryventilation.com

For assistance with analysis and remediation, contact your Area Specialized Poultry agent, water quality service provider or flock supervisor.