Greetings Everyone,

It appears spring is here, the cold and snowy winter is behind us. It is time to start focusing on forage and vegetable production this spring into summer, and marketing vegetables, goats, and sheep all the way into fall. I assume you have submitted and received soil test results from the soil sample you sent off in January or February. And you have already begun sewing clover and crabgrass seed for spring and summer grazing. If you have not done either it is not too late. By now your kids and lambs that were born in December should be weaned or almost weaned and at market weight or almost there. Market prices for goats and sheep have varied these past few months. Prices for goats have been up compared to the past few years, prices for sheep have been very lackluster as of the end of March into April. At Extension we have been busy planning events for late spring into summer. This newsletter will share a variety of relevant information.

In this issue you will find: (1) Articles of Interest, recent information that should be of interest to those with livestock. (2) Upcoming Events, whether your interest lies in small animal production, fruits and vegetables, specialty structures, or USDA programs, we and our colleagues have an event for you. (3) Flyers for upcoming events please help us promote them.

For the summer newsletter I will share results from the ACES Sheep and Goat Producer Survey that many of you provided input. As of the first of April we were still receiving a few entries.

I hope this information benefits you and your farm. As always, I appreciate your interest and support regarding Alabama Cooperative Extension System/Urban Affairs and New Nontraditional Programs. If you feel this information is relevant please share this information with other producers. As always, please feel free to contact me with any questions or suggestions; we are always looking for ways to improve the quality of our programs and services.

Sincerely,

Robert Spencer
Urban Regional Extension Specialist

**Articles of Interest**

**Tapeworms in 2013**

Fall of 2013 brought about an unusual situation for goat and sheep producers, problems with tapeworms in their animals. During my thirteen years of working with goat and sheep producer this was my first time to hear of tapeworms infestations to the degree of diminished health and mortality in small ruminants. I initially thought this situation was confined to Northwest Alabama, but learned otherwise as I talked with producers in other parts of the State and producers in South Georgia and South-Central Tennessee. I also thought problems with tapeworms were confined to puppies, but have learned more through an inquiry with a local veterinarian and some research.
Many producers are familiar with the typical signs of tapeworm infestation: they see the obvious expelled worm eggs in feces of livestock or puppies (whereas they cannot see stomach worms, only their symptoms or eggs). We tend to notice what looks like pieces of white rice in fecal matter, and eventually notice little larvae crawling about. Mature tapeworms shed segments, which are expelled with the feces. These segments are packed with eggs.

Tapeworm is a parasite that has potential to cause intestinal disease in vertebrate animals. The tapeworm gets its name from its shape, a flat ribbon. The tapeworm belongs to the family of cestoda and is one of three members in the group of parasitic worms that also includes nematodes and trematodes. Tapeworm is a persistent worm that is difficult to remove once it is entrenched in the body. However, there are treatments that can be administered to treat cattle affected by tapeworm.

Tapeworms are a problem because they consume nutrients from food consumed by its hosts. Its hook-like head allows it to secure itself on the intestines of animals. The symptoms of tapeworm infestation are the same in all livestock. At first, when parasite is still in the larval stage, animals show almost no signs of infection. Later, when the worms grow fully and occupy intestine of hosts, animals begin to exhibit symptoms which include weight loss, lethargy, diarrhea, atrophy and swelling of the stomach. Tapeworms in cattle are less common and less serious than in sheep and goats, but the method of treatment is the same.

Drugs including albendazole, praziquantel, oxyfendazole and fenbendazole are commonly used to treat tapeworms in livestock. Each of these drugs is available under several brand names. A veterinarian should help you decide which drug is your best option based on the stage of the growth of the tapeworm. If the worm is still in its developmental stage, albendazole is a good alternative. Consult with a vet for more information.

Sheep & Goat Inventories: National and State Estimates
New estimates have been released by USDA’s National Agricultural Statistics Service regarding national and state sheep and goat inventories. The overall downward trend continues, as it has been for several years, whereby many state inventories are at 2007-2008 levels. Alabama reversed the trend but inventories reflect years gone by.

U.S. sheep and lamb inventories in the United States on January 1, 2014, totaled 5.21 million head, down 2 percent from 2013. Breeding sheep inventory decreased to 3.88 million head on January 1, 2014, down 2 percent from 3.98 million head on January 1, 2013. Ewes one year old and older, at 3.07 million head, were 2 percent below last year. Market sheep and lambs on January 1, 2014, totaled 1.33 million head, down 2 percent from January 1, 2013. Market lambs comprised 94 percent of the total market inventory. Twenty-five percent were lambs under 65 pounds, 11 percent were 65–84 pounds, 24 percent were 85 – 105 pounds, and 34 percent were over 105 pounds. Market sheep comprised the remaining 6 percent of total market inventory.

U.S. goat inventories in the United States on January 1, 2014, totaled 2.76 million head, down 2 percent from 2013. Breeding goat inventory totaled 2.26 million head, down 3 percent from 2013. Does one year old and older, at 1.69 million head, were 3 percent below last year’s number. Market goats and kids totaled 500 thousand head, up 2 percent from a year ago. Kid crop for 2013 totaled 1.74 million head for all goats, down 3 percent from 2012. Meat and all other goats totaled 2.28 million head on January 1, 2014, down 2 percent from 2013. Milk goat inventory was 355 thousand head, down 1 percent from January 1, 2013.

AL & TN sheep and goat inventories: For the first time in several years Alabama goat inventory and Tennessee sheep and goat inventories have reversed the national trend and actually increased. Sheep inventories actually increased in TN; AL does not inventory sheep, so we have no idea regarding their trend in sheep. Alabama meat and other goat inventories actually increased from 42,000 in 2013 to 49,000 in 2014; a 17% increase. Milk goat inventories in AL remained the same at 3,500. Tennessee meat and other goat inventories increased from 114,000 in 2013 to 120,000 in
2014. Other neighboring states (MS, GA, & FL) followed the national trend and showed decreases in meat and other goat inventories.


USDA Encourages Early Registration for FSA Programs

U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency (FSA) Administrator Juan M. Garcia this week recommended that farmers and ranchers who plan to participate in FSA programs register in advance. Producers are encouraged to report farm records and business structure changes to a local FSA Service Center as soon as possible.

With the passage of the 2014 Farm Bill, both the Livestock Indemnity Program and the Livestock Forage Disaster Program became permanent programs, providing retroactive authority to cover eligible livestock losses back to Oct. 1, 2011. Eligible livestock under the LIP program include beef and dairy cattle, bison, poultry, sheep, swine and horses. Enrollment for the programs will begin by April 15.

According to Garcia "Early registration should help improve the sign-up process and allow us to expedite implementation of the programs. I strongly encourage producers to complete their paperwork ahead of time." For more information on eligibility and the application process producers should contact their local FSA office or go to www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/fbapp?area=home&subject=landing&topic=landing&utm_source=spotlight&utm_medium=click&utm_content=rotation1&utm_campaign=2014farmbill.

That Yellow Weed (taken from the Winter 2014 issue of ACES Livestock Links)

Henry D. Dorough, CCA, PAS, Regional Extension Agent, Stephen Enloe, Extension Weed Specialist, Kevan Tucker, County Extension Coordinator, Jennifer Johnson, Extension Forage Specialist

As Extension professionals, we routinely receive calls each spring about weed control in pastures and hayfields. One of the most common weed calls statewide in March and April deals with a weed known as hairy buttercup. This annual plant germinates in the fall and winter and usually remains off farmers' radar until late winter when it begins to grow and flower. By March and April, seas of yellow are throughout Alabama. Livestock generally graze around buttercup because of its bitter taste. As hairy buttercup grows in the spring, it competes for sunlight, water, and nutrient resources, eventually forming a canopy of yellow that further suppresses the growth of desirable forages.

Hairy buttercup is considered a poisonous plant that produces a compound called ranunculin, which can lead to severe gastrointestinal issues when animals are forced to eat it. Although buttercup poisoning is rare in Alabama, hungry animals can consume toxic amounts when no other forage is available.

The primary problem with controlling buttercup is most livestock producers pay little attention to it until their pastures turn solid yellow with the showy flowers. Herbicide applications on mature buttercup are effective, but the plants have already produced viable seed for the next year. The primary benefit of such a late treatment would be to open the canopy to release desirable forages. Mowing buttercup at this stage will produce the same result. A common call we get from farmers is "I’ve got that yellow weed in my pasture. Tell me how to kill it. But I don’t want to kill my clover."
Herbicide options to control most broadleaf weed problems also lend themselves to taking out established clover. At some point though, it may be necessary to sacrifice clover to eliminate problem weeds and improve desirable forage stands. Clover can always be reestablished once the target weed problem is under control.

With buttercup, however, there is some good news. In the 1970s, C. Wayne Smith and his colleagues at the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station discovered that white clover could tolerate low rates of various 2,4-D formulations applied during the fall and winter months. More importantly, they discovered hairy buttercup was easily controlled with the same low rates. John Everest and Mike Davis with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System conducted tests with 2,4-D Amine at 0.5 and 0.7 pints/acre in December 1999 and February 2000 to evaluate the control of buttercup and the impact on white clover. They discovered the 0.5 pint/acre rate provided 85 percent control of buttercup with no damage to white clover, while the higher rate resulted in 90 percent buttercup control and no damage to white clover when applied in December.

This past winter we tested multiple 2,4-D formulations on mixed stands of hairy buttercup and established ‘ladino’ white clover. We applied treatments in either December 2012 or February 2013 on warm (60 degrees F) days. For each 2,4-D product tested, we used a standard rate of 0.35 pounds acid equivalent per acre, which is equal to 0.5 pints/A of a 2,4-D formulation containing 3.8 pounds acid equivalent per gallon. Our results were clear when we evaluated the tests in April. At both locations, every formulation of 2,4-D was incredibly effective in reducing buttercup cover by 93 to 100 percent compared to untreated plots. Additionally, buttercup control was equally effective at both December and February treatment timings. Hairy buttercup is sensitive to 2,4-D and does not seem to germinate beyond the fall.

White clover cover ranged from 44 to 48 percent in plots treated in December and from 49 to 60 percent in plots treated in February. These were similar to white clover cover in untreated reference plots. At both treatment timings, white clover heights ranged from 5 to 6 inches and were not different from the untreated reference plots. We did not measure clover yields in this study, but the cover and height data collected provided every indication that yields were not reduced by the 2,4-D treatments. Given the treatment success, here are a few additional notes. First, treatment with 2,4-D should only be done where white clover is well established. The 2,4-D treatment might temporarily injure established white clover, but it can kill white clover seedlings. Second, 2,4-D is much more injurious to other clovers such as red or crimson clover and should not be used when they are abundant. Third, this low rate of 2,4-D may not be effective for some other winter weeds, such as musk thistle. It is not a silver bullet treatment, but it is effective on buttercup and it will spare your white clover.

There is one caveat though. If you have experienced hairy buttercup in your pastures for many years, you are not likely to wipe it out with one low-rate application of 2,4-D in 1 year. Because it has a hard seed coat, you will likely need to spray several years in a row to eliminate buttercup as a problem weed in your pastures.

**USDA Announces Support for Small and Mid-Sized Farmers and Ranchers**

This week in remarks at the National Farmers Union National Convention, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced new and expanded efforts to connect small- and mid-sized farmers and ranchers with U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) resources that can help them build stronger businesses, expand to reach new and larger markets and grow their operations.

"The recent Census of Agriculture shows that there is tremendous growth potential for small and mid-sized producers in the American agricultural landscape," said Vilsack. "USDA is taking a hard look at our existing resources to ensure that they work for producers of all sizes. We've adjusted policies, strengthened programs and intensified outreach to meet the needs of small and mid-sized producers. These producers are critical to our country's agricultural and economic future." Efforts include improved access to USDA resources, revised risk management tools that better fit the needs of smaller producers, additional support for hoop houses and expanded collection of valuable..."
market news information. USDA is also introducing a series of education tools focusing on opportunities for farmers engaged in local and regional food systems. In addition, USDA field staff will be boosting their outreach efforts to small and mid-sized farmers and ranchers.

More information about tools and resources available to small and mid-sized farmers will be rolled out in the coming months, including information about access to capital, risk management, food safety and locating market opportunities at www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?contentidonly=true&contentid=small-midsized-farmer-resources.xml.

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**Upcoming Events**

*Please see information below and attached flyers at the end of this newsletter regarding various areas of interest. Also, please share this information with others who may be interested.*

**Backyard Poultry Workshop, May 20**
Upper Coastal Plain Ag. & Research Center, Winfield, AL @ 6PM. Call 256-974-2464 for more information.

**Webinar: Managing Your Pastures Better**
The first Grow Our Flock webinar for 2014 has been scheduled. Managing Your Pastures Better: Management Intensive Grazing (MIG) 101 will be offered on April 22 at 5 p.m. MDT. Register now by going to https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/5755892051703340802. After registering, a confirmation email about joining the webinar will be sent.

Sheep are magnificent animals that evolved to eat grass. A sheep's rumen allows it to thrive on high-fiber forage and effectively convert sunlight and atmospheric nitrogen into valuable human products like meat, wool and milk. But how can shepherds use sheep to harvest this forage in a profitable and sustainable way?

With grazing, shepherds can use sheep to harvest this forage in a profitable and sustainable way. Good grazing requires knowledge and good technique. This webinar will discuss how forages grow, how to use sheep to manage forage in a sustainable and efficient way and the principles of MIG. By properly managing forages, feeding costs can be reduced, pastures improved, weeds reduced, break-even price reduced and profits increased.

Host Jay Parsons, Ph.D., Colorado State University and Optimal Ag Consulting, and presenter, Woody Lane, Ph.D., Lane Livestock Services, a livestock nutritionist and forage specialist, will offer this valuable information.

**Alabama Club Lamb Sale – East Alabama Sheep and Goat Auction**
Sale Barn, 1006 County Road 474, Woodland, Alabama
Saturday, April 26th, sale starts at 12 noon, view lambs at 9:00 am
Showmanship education will begin at 10 am.
The market lamb project is a very popular project among youth in Alabama. The market lamb project teaches youth the daily responsibility and discipline required to care for a live animal and develops confidence and pride in ownership as they watch their animal grow and develop. An animal project is also an excellent tool for teaching management skills needed for a potential career in animal agriculture. Working with sheep/lambs is a great developmental tool for kids and teens, especially younger kids. Having kids and teens work with livestock gives them a unique advantage in learning important life skills, not to mention having a lot of fun at the same time.
For more information contact: Phil Slay 931-337-4860 or Robbie Benefiled 770-550-6330, Sale Barn 256-419-8527
**Annual Small Ruminant Conference & Field Day, May 30, Nashville, TN**

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES) in partnership with Tennessee State University’s College of Agriculture, Human and Natural Sciences, is conducting its *Seventh Annual Small Ruminant Conference and Field Day* at Tennessee State University’s Meat Goat Research Farm, Main Campus Agricultural Research and Education Center located at 1717 Temple Road in Nashville on Friday, May 30, 2014.

The Annual Small Ruminant Conference and Field Day is a yearly tradition between ACES at Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical University (A&M) and Tennessee State University (TSU) that is designed to educate audiences about the art of meat goat production. The theme this year is “The Basics.” Agricultural experts will provide research-based information and hands-on demonstrations at TSU’s Agricultural Research and Education Center that is the home of more than 350 Boer, Tennessee Fainting, Kiko, Spanish, and Savanna breeding stock.

Admission is free and open to the public; however, participants are encouraged to pre-register by May 15th by calling or e-mailing one of the following individuals. Contacts: Dr. Maria Leite-Browning at 256-372-4954 Dr. Richard Browning at 615-963-5837

**Health and Parasite Management in Small Ruminants Training Workshop**

May 31, 2014, at Caprine Research and Education Unit (Goat Farm), Tuskegee University.

Small ruminant producers and professionals will readily benefit from this program. Now, is the time to adopt an integrated approach of managing gastrointestinal parasites including barber pole worm. Moreover, external parasites, and infectious and other diseases play a crucial role in the health and well-being of small ruminants. Producers and professionals must be aware of all these health problems and be able to prevent them on time. This program aims to educate extension professionals and producers on the major health problems in small ruminants and various strategies to prevent them.

**Workshop topics/activities (9:00 A.M. - 3:00 P.M.)**

- Major diseases and parasites (internal & external) of small ruminants and their prevention strategies
- Pasture and grazing management for controlling internal parasites
- Nutrition, feeding, and immunity against parasites and diseases
- FAMACHA and smart drenching
- Use of tannin containing feeds and forages to control internal parasites
- Parasite drug resistance in small ruminants: causes and solutions
- Hands-on activities: General health inspection, use of FAMACHA card, condition score, hoof inspection and trimming, taking temperature, fecal sample collection and examination, identifying parasites and parasite larvae, etc.

Registration fee: $10.00 (if pre-registered by May 16, 2014); $15.00 (after May 16, 2014). Working lunch and snacks will be served and a package of educational materials will be provided.

Please reserve your place today by sending Registration Form along with the registration fee to: Ms. Yvonne Wright, 201 Morrison-Mayberry Hall, Tuskegee University Cooperative Extension Program, Tuskegee, AL 36088. For registration question, contact Ms. Wright - Phone: 334-724-4440, Email: wright@mytu.tuskegee.edu

For driving direction and further information about the program, see Program Flyer and Program Agenda. Any additional question about the program must be directed to Dr. Uma Karki, Email: karkiu@mytu.tuskegee.edu, Phone: (334) 727-8336. Or, visit: http://drkarkiu.blogspot.com/2014/04/health-and-parasite-management-in-small_14.html
Small-Scale Farming & Sustainability Workshops

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System and the Alabama Mountains, Rivers, and Valleys Resource, Conservation, and Development Council are proud to offer a series of educational workshops on how to establish sustainable ventures in small-scale vegetable, fruit, and livestock production.

Topics will include:

- Rainwater collection for crop irrigation
- Hoop houses or high tunnels for fruits and vegetables
- Sustainable small ruminant animal production practices for goats, sheep, rabbits, and poultry
- Programs available through the United States Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources and Conservation Service and the Alabama Mountains, Rivers, and Valleys Resource, Conservation, and Development Council

**Workshop Dates**

All workshops run from 6:00-8:00 p.m. with doors opening at 5:30 p.m.

**Madison, Jackson, & Nearby Counties — Thursday, May 22**

AAMU Agribition Center
4925 Moores Mill Road
Huntsville, AL 35811

*Just east of Huntsville between Hwy 72 East and Winchester Road*

**Cullman, Blount, & Nearby Counties — Thursday, June 12**

Agriplex Heritage Center
1714 Talley Ho Street SW
Cullman, AL 35055

*Just south of Hwy 278 and East of I-65*

**Limestone, Morgan, & Nearby Counties — Thursday, July 10**

Tennessee Valley Research Station
9494 Experimental Loop
Madison, AL 35756

*Off Mooresville Road*  
*Between I-565 & Hwy 72 East*

**DeKalb, Marshall, & Nearby Counties — Thursday, July 31**

Sand Mountain Research Station
13112 Highway 68
Crossville, AL 35962

*Approximately 1 mile east of Crossville*

Light refreshments will be served – please let us know if you have special needs.

To register, please contact Mike Roden or Renona Siebert at 256-773-8495 or Robert Spencer at 256-766-6223 or rds0002@aces.edu.
Northwest Alabama Summer Forages & Pasture Walk

Saturday, June 21, 2014
9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. – Sign-in begins at 8:30 a.m.

J. C. Holt Farm
293 Mt. Pleasant Road, Muscle Shoals, AL 35661

Northwest Alabama Summer Forages & Pasture Walk
Quality summer-time forages are an efficient method to ensure low-cost nutrition for grazing animals. While summer heat generally causes most grasses and legumes to go dormant, there are other options that flourish during summer and provide quality nutrition at the same time. The ability for farmers to provide quality summer grazing along with a forage strategy helps reduce expenses and increases the likelihood of profitability.

Discussion Topics:
- NRCS Conservation Programs
- Role of Northwest Alabama RC&D Council
- New & Beginning Farmer Programs
- Summer Forage Options, Values, and Planting Information
- Pasture Ride & Walk to View Legumes and Grasses

Ideal event for sheep, goat, cattle, and horse farmers

Directions to JC’s Farm (across from Old Brick Church):

- **From Muscle Shoals, Tuscumbia, or Florence:** Take AL Hwy 184 (2nd St.) east 7.9 miles, turn left on County Line Road and go 1 mile, turn right onto Mt. Pleasant Rd, go .2 miles, turn left onto driveway, after crossing bridge, turn left again to small green house
- **From East Florence:** Take Hwy 133 South, exit at River Rd and go east to County Line Road where you will turn right, go about 1 mile and turn left on Mt. Pleasant Rd, go .2 miles and turn left onto driveway, after crossing bridge, turn left again and to small green house
- **From Elgin:** Take Hwy 101 and go 7.5 miles south, turn right onto Hwy 184 and go 7 miles, turn right onto County Line Rd and go 1 mile, turn right onto Mt. Pleasant Rd, go .2 miles, turn left onto driveway, after crossing bridge, turn left again to small green house
- **From Decatur:** On Alabama Hwy 20 go 26 miles west to Hwy 101, turn right onto 101 and go 5 miles north to Hwy 184, turn left onto 184 (Second St.) and go 7 miles north to County Line Rd, turn right and go 1 mile north on County Line Rd, turn right onto Mount Pleasant Rd, go .2 miles and turn left onto driveway, after crossing bridge, turn left again and to small green house

Please preregister to let us know if you have special needs & so we can provide light refreshments.

To preregister, please contact Robert Spencer at 256-766-6223 or rds0002@aces.edu.

USDA is an Equal Opportunity Employer, Provider, and Lender. For additional information or to request special accommodations, contact Mike Roden @ 256-773-8495 five days or more before the desired workshop date.