

SUMMER MANAGEMENT TIPS

June 2015

As I write this newsletter in late May, the weather is almost perfect---warm days, cool nights and adequate rain. But that is going to change. No one knows for sure what this summer weather will be, but if it is like most summers in Piedmont North Carolina, there will be periods of dry weather, high humidity, and temperatures in the mid to upper 90's with nighttime temperatures staying in the mid to upper 70's. With that in mind, here are a few animal management tips:

1. **NEVER** leave your pet in the car while you "run" inside to do a quick errand. Temperatures inside a car can reach well over 100 degrees within a matter of minutes which can lead to heat stroke for your pet and very possibly death. If your pet dies as a result of being in a hot car, the charge is "cruelty" which is no longer a misdemeanor but a **felony**.
2. **Make sure your livestock have plenty of shade and water to escape the effects of the hot summers.** Black colored animals absorb more heat than white and lighter colored animals, therefore it is even more critical for them to have plenty of shade. When the night temperatures stay in the upper 70's with high humidity, it is difficult for large animals, such as a 1200 – 1500 pound cows, to dissipate the heat that has accumulated during the day. With these animals, it may be necessary to take additional measures such as providing fans and misters, especially if it is high value show or registered stock.
3. **Flies are always a problem during the summer months.** Flies spread disease such as pinkeye and cause a decrease in weight gain from the constant irritation and the livestock trying to dispel the flies by swishing their tail, stomping their feet, slinging their head, and not grazing because of the irritation. In addition, horn flies (those small flies found on the backs of cattle) suck blood from their hosts.

Here at Mebane Tractor, we have several different fly control products including sprays for horses and cattle, fly ear tags for cattle, back rubbers, etc. We also have a product that clips onto a dog's collar that controls fleas and ticks.

4. **It is getting late, but summer annuals such as pearl millet, sudan grass, and sudan-sorghum hybrids can be planted as late as mid/late-June.** Overall yield may be reduced as compared to an early May planting but they can still be grazed or harvested for hay/silage approximately 6 weeks after planting (assuming adequate moisture). We have seed available for these grasses.
5. **If you are contemplating renovating or establishing pasture this fall, it is not too early to get started** by taking soil samples and researching what to plant and what varieties to plant. There is no charge for submitting soil samples to the NCDA Soils Lab from March until November and it is fairly easy to get a soil probe into the ground. Come August, it will be difficult to get a soil probe into the ground and the lab results may not be back in time for planting in September.

6. **Be on the lookout for deteriorating pasture conditions** as the summer gets drier and temperatures climb. Watch the body condition score on the animals and make sure they are not losing weight. If they are, then corrective measures should be taken immediately. Remember, **if grass is less than one inch in height, cattle cannot graze enough to meet their nutritional requirements.**

7. **Watch for respiratory problems** in livestock. Pneumonia is very common during the summer due to dusty conditions and heat stress.

8. **Summer storms can bring down trees and tree limbs.** This is not usually a problem unless it is wild cherry trees or red maple trees. **Wilted Wild Cherry Tree Leaves** are highly poisonous to all classes of livestock (cattle, horses, sheep, goats) and **wilted Red Maple Tree Leaves** are highly poisonous to horses. Red maples are not real common in this area but they do exist. The sugar maple is much more common but apparently is not a problem with horses. These two trees can be distinguished from each other by their leaves. Red Maple trees have red leaves in the fall and sugar maples have yellow leaves. Red Maple trees have leaves that look like the maple leaf found on the Canadian Flag.

9. **Special precautions should be taken in transporting livestock during the summer.** A lot of cattle are marketed during the hot summer months of June, July, and August. When shipping cattle or other livestock during these months, it is best to do it at night or very early morning. Once the livestock are loaded, they should be kept moving so that air can move throughout the trailer which will help dissipate the heat generated by the animals being close together. In addition, they should not be loaded until they have had a chance to dissipate the heat accumulated during the day---usually several hours after sundown. If livestock are loaded when they are hot, it greatly increases the chance of death due to heat stress especially if they are large animals and have extra body condition.

When transporting horses, be aware that temperatures inside the horse trailer can rise rapidly when stopped, especially if it is in the direct sun. If it is hot inside the horse trailer for you, it is doubly hot for the horse.

10. **Check water sources every day.** In the hot summer, livestock will die within 3 days if deprived of water. Check the water not only to be sure it is available, but to be sure it is of adequate drinking quality. Ponds and streams become stagnant during dry weather which concentrates bacteria and other contaminants, and containerized water produces algae if not protected from sunlight. Algae causes off-flavors in the water which reduces consumption and some algae are poisonous.

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