

Ashe County Sheep and Goat Newsletter

Ashe County Center

May 2017



Inside This Issue

Getting More Out
Of Your Pasture

Caring For
Your Donkey

Wool Bags

Goat and Sheep
Meeting



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Getting More Out Of Your Pasture

Could I get more out of my pasture? Well it depends, but more than likely, yes. Here is a list of steps that you may need to take to get more out of your pasture.

- ✓ **Do you allow your pasture rest?** Pasture grasses need rest to restore carbohydrates in the plants. This is important to allow the plants energy for maximum growth and yield. Allowing plants to rest and not be overgrazed increases the root mass. In periods of dry weather, plants with increased root growth will be more likely to receive and locate water. In the spring the rest can be as short as 10-14 days. In the summer, rest increases to about 35 days. Allowing rest can be accomplished easily with temporary fencing. If you see your goats/sheep several times per week, then multiple paddocks may work well for your schedule and definitely for your grasses. I only see my sheep once a week and multiple paddocks wouldn't work for me because of my schedule, however, I know the benefits of allowing your grasses rest periods. What worked for me this past season was dividing my pasture into two large paddocks. While the sheep grazed one side for several months it allowed the other pasture rest.
- ✓ **How long has it been since you pulled a soil sample?** This is a free service through spring, summer and fall. The only expense is postage to mail the samples. I will come out and pull the samples. All you have to do is show me the fields you want sampled and take the soil to the post office to mail. It takes approximately two weeks for the soil report to process. You will need to go online (<http://www.ncagr.gov/agronomi/pals/>) to obtain your report or contact me (336-846-5850) and I will print the report for you. I can help you determine how much fertilize is needed or you can take your report to have a custom fertilize made. This report will also tell you how much lime you need. The pH needs to be between 5.8-6.2 or if you have grass clover mixed pasture then the pH should be 6.2-6.4. Acidic conditions reduce nutrient availability, root growth and nitrogen fixation by legumes. Calcitic lime will provide calcium and magnesium and reduce the availability of toxic nutrients such as aluminum and manganese. No more than 1.5 tons of lime per acre should be applied at one time. If your soil needs two tons per acre I would split that between two applications, one in the spring and one in the fall.
- ✓ **Weed control is very important to minimize the competition of your grasses.** Weeds occur for a variety of reasons such as: poor fertility, overgrazing and using forages that are not adapted to our region. Its important to take care of these situations as you are controlling your weed population. If you have questions about a weed or spray, please contact me at (336) 846-5850.
- ✓ **Frost seeding clover is a good agricultural practice.** Make sure you reduce plant residue to ensure proper seed to soil contact. Thawing and freezing of the ground helps incorporate the seed in late winter/early spring. This practice does not work well with grass seed. Do not apply nitrogen just before or after seeding. Important seeding dates for grass seed are:
 - ✓ *Orchard Grass:* March 20–April 20 or July 25–August 10 at a planting depth of 1/4 - 1/2 inches and a seeding rate of 12-15 lbs/acre broadcast or 8-12 lbs/acre drill.
 - ✓ *Fescue:* March 20–April 20 or July 25–August 10 at a planting depth of 1/4–1/2 inches and a seeding rate of 15–20 lbs/acre broadcast or 10–15 lbs/acre drill.

Caring For Your Donkey

Many livestock producers use donkey as protection against predators. Females are preferred due to their ability to bond with the animals. If using more than one donkey, they are likely to bond with each other and not the livestock they are protecting.

If not managed, donkeys are prone to obesity, metabolic issues and laminitis. Donkeys originated in areas that have sparse and low quality forages and have adapted to this by digesting feed and forages slowly. This can be a challenge if you feed high quality forages. Donkeys should be fed high fiber forages of low nutritional value. Hoof care should also be a part of you management. Overgrown hooves will limit the donkeys ability to protect your animals.



Wool Bags

The North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Ashe County Center has wool bags available at no charge to producers. Please contact Micah Orfield, Extension Agent, Agriculture for additional information at (336) 846-5850.

Goat and Sheep Meeting

May 16, 2017

6:30 p.m.

Southern States

Dinner Provided



Learn about

- **FAMACHA**
- **Body Condition Scoring**

If you would like to be FAMACHA certified the cost is \$15.00

Please RSVP to the North Carolina Cooperative Extension,
Ashe County Center at (336) 846-5850 by May 9, 2017

Sincerely,



Micah Orfield
Extension Agent, Agriculture