CFAES
ATHENS COUNTY EXTENSION

GROWING ATHENS COUNTY

Growing Plants and Animals in Athens County Ohio
November I 2018

Photo by Lindsey Brighton

IN THIS ISSUE:

Forestry.....Page 2
Ewe Winter Feeding .....Page 3
Cattle Decisions……..Page 4
Master Gardener Class.Page 5
Japanese Stiltgrass.....Page 5
Focus on Ag: Vest .....Page 6
BQA and Calendar.....Page 7
The Last Word.....Page 8

We Grow ‘em Big Here

I was contacted last week by the daughter of Rick Vest wanting to know about records being kept the largest fruits and vegetables grown in the state. After a little searching, it was found that no such records are kept, except for the giant pumpkins. Well, I will keep my own records and start with these 14 pound sweet potatoes grown by Rick Vest of Vest Berries. He has been a supporter of our Extension programs here in Athens County and a cooperator with our research on spotted wing fruit flies that have invaded the eastern U.S.

Harvest season has yielded some good and bad surprises around the county and hopefully everyone learned a little more about farm management. Take a look inside for a complete story on the sweet potatoes and some articles that might help as we enter the planning season.

Ed Brown

Forestry

Forestry is an important part of the economy of southeast Ohio. Not only in the production of timber for wood products, but in tourism, and woodland products. People come to hunt, camp and hike in the area.

Athens County forestry by the numbers:

- **240,000 acres of forestland**
- **81% of forestland is privately owned**
- **There is 1.8 billion board feet of sawtimber**
- **$297,000 in forestland production each year**
- **This is turned into $16.66 million dollars of labor income, value-added products, and industrial output.**
- **The result is $165,000 in local and state taxes and $278,000 in federal taxes**

Some specialty products that come from the woodlands

- **Maple syrup**
- **Mushrooms**
- **Nuts**
- **Berries**
- **Pawpaw**
- **Ginseng**
- **Goldenseal**
- **Black cohosh**
- **Ramps**

Woodland Wildlife Habitat Program

Two-thirds of Ohio's woodlands are located in our Appalachian Counties. These woodlands are often dominated by oak and hickory trees that provide important habitat for a wide variety of wildlife species. On November 9, biologists from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources-Division of Wildlife, Ohio University and the National Wild Turkey Federation will be on hand at the Vinton Furnace State Forest to help us to explore "Woodland Wildlife Habitat" and the critters that use it. This program will provide opportunities for attendees to:

- Discover the variety woodland wildlife habitats that can be found in our Appalachian woodlands
- Learn about bears, bobcats and other critters that rely on these habitats
- Find out about ways that you can help to improve these habitats and their ability to provide food, water, cover and space for wildlife in your area
- Learn how to effectively use trail cameras and other techniques to monitor the variety of habitats in your woods

This program will take place at the Vinton Furnace State Forest from 9:00 AM to 3:30 PM. A registration fee of $12 will cover the cost of lunch and program materials. Please RSVP by calling OSU Extension Vinton County at 740-596-5212, or email Dave Apsley at apsley.1@osu.edu by November 5

White oak acorns

Ewe Winter Feeding Systems, the Long-Term Effects on Lamb Performance—*Brady Campbell*

As we approach the winter months, I find it timely to discuss what types of feedstuffs are available to feed gestating ewes. Last fall I published a summary from Radunz and others (2011) that covered the effects of winter feeding systems on ewe performance which can be found by clicking this link. For those not able to access the link, three different diets were fed to gestating ewes during the last 90 days of gestation which consisted of either forage (haylage), grain (limit fed corn), or by-products (limit fed dried distillers grains). After birth, all ewes were fed the same lactation diet.

From an economic perspective, feeding by-products proved to be roughly $0.01/head/day cheaper than grain and forage diets. Forage fed ewes had a lower body condition score during the latter portion of pregnancy to birth when compared to grain and by-product fed ewes. At weaning (60 days of age), ewes fed by-products had a greater body condition score when compared to grain and forage fed ewes. Lambs born from grain and by-product fed ewes were heavier (13.3 lbs. and 13.5 lbs.) than forage fed ewes (12.0 lbs.). Overall, there was no effect on ewe milk yield or quality. At weaning, there was no difference in lamb body weight.

By the looks of the summary above, feeding by-products to ewes during gestation seems to be well worth it. Ewes on this type of gestation diet remain in good condition, give birth to large lambs, and the diet itself is cheaper when compared to grain and forage diets. However, we cannot let our train of thought end here. Thinking beyond the ewe, how do these three different types of gestation diets effect the growth, performance, and carcass composition of lambs during the finishing period? Would those lambs from by-product fed ewes perform better than the others just as their mothers did? To find out, Radunz and others conducted and additional experiment investigating just that.

Upon weaning, lambs from the previously summarized experiment were placed into a feedlot and fed a common high concentrate diet. Lambs were harvested individually when they had roughly 0.24 in. of back fat over the 12th rib as determined by manual palpation.

As mentioned above, weaning weight did not differ between groups; however, final harvest weights differed based upon ewe gestational diet whereas lambs from by-product fed ewes had the heaviest weight (127.9 lbs.), lambs from grain fed ewes were intermediate (121.0 lbs.), and lambs from forage fed ewes were the lightest (114.4 lbs.).

At the conclusion of all harvests, all carcasses had similar hot carcass weights. However, dressing percentage ((carcass weight ÷ live weight) x 100) was greater for lambs from ewes fed grain and forage diets (50.1% and 49.9%) as compared to the by-product diet (48.6%).

Due to the manner in which lambs were removed from trial, there was no difference in back fat among treatments. There was a difference in loin eye area (an indication of overall muscling); whereas lambs from grain fed ewes had the largest loin eye area (2.53 in.^{2}), with lambs from by-product fed ewes had the smallest loin eye area (2.26 in.^{2}), and lambs from forage fed ewes were intermediate (2.40 in.^{2}). The proportion of internal or wasteful fat tended to be greatest to smallest in lambs from ewes fed by-products (7.10%), grain (6.30%), and forage diets (5.95%). In calculating the overall value of lamb carcasses, lambs from ewes fed by-products had a boneless trimmed retail cut percentage that was less (48.6%) than lambs from grain or forage fed ewes (49.3% and 49.5%).

To wrap this series of experiments up, while evaluating lamb feedlot performance alone, the data from the feedlot phase shows that ewe gestation diet did have an effect on lamb performance and carcass composition. Although lambs from ewes fed by-product diets were heavier in weight at harvest, these lambs also had the greatest amount of internal fat in conjunction with the smallest loin eyes. Furthermore, the lambs from by-product fed ewes had the lowest percentage of boneless trimmed retail cuts.

However, it cannot go un-noticed that during gestation, by-product fed ewes remained in the best body condition, had the heaviest lamb birth weights, and overall cost less on a per head/day basis.

At the end of the day, it is ultimately the producer's decision upon what gestation diet they will choose.

Now Isn't the Time for Business as Usual—*John F. Grimes*

The fall harvest season has been evident across Ohio over the past several weeks. This certainly applies to both grain farmers and beef cow-calf producers. Grain crops are being harvested and sold or placed in storage for future sales. Cattle producers have even more options as most of the spring 2018 calf crop has been weaned and decisions are being made as to whether calves should be sold as feeders, placed in backgrounding enterprises, sent to a feedlot, or heifers retained as future herd replacement females.

Many important beef management decisions are made late in the calendar year. Any owner or manager of an operation should have a basic awareness of the overall economic situation and long-term outlook for their segment of the beef industry. So where does the beef industry stand today?

The current cattle cycle that began earlier this decade is showing signs of coming to a conclusion. The beef industry has experienced an eventful decade that has seen a rapid decline in cowherd numbers followed by rapid expansion driven by record high prices in 2014 and 2015. Market prices have moderated more recently in response to increases in the supplies of all classes of beef animals. However, market prices have stabilized to the point of giving producers a reasonable chance of profitability. The U.S. consumer who is expected to purchase more than 218 pounds of beef, pork and poultry in 2018, has made this possible. Foreign trade is also a key factor in current prices as the livestock and poultry industry sends more than 40 pounds per person to the global marketplace.

Cow-calf producers should realize that feeder calf marketing is undergoing significant changes across the country. The market is currently sending a clear message that buyers are demanding more for their purchasing dollars. Significant discounts are occurring in the market place for feeder calves that are not weaned 45-60 days, castrated & healed, dehorned, and given two rounds of a modified live vaccine for the shipping fever complex. Exports to China and other countries are going to require age and source verification. These are growing realities for cow-calf producers if they want access to as many markets as possible.

Many producers will question the merits of implementing value added practices, as they simply believe that they do not receive sufficient financial rewards to justify these extra practices. The reality is that you probably will not be properly compensated if you are selling a small number of calves at any type of traditional sale. Consider working with other producers to put together larger groups of calves of similar breed composition, weight, and sex.

Today's cattlemen will surely face many challenges in the next cattle cycle to remain economically viable in the beef industry. Conducting "business as usual" may not be the best path to success.

Ohio BEEF Cattle Letter
A publication of the Ohio State University

Beef Cattle Letter

The Ohio State Beef Cattle team produces a weekly newsletter with articles relevant to cattle production in Ohio. It can be found at u.osu.edu/beef

Master Gardener Training Class

A new Master Gardener class is forming. Orientation is **January 30** with classes meeting February 6 - April 24. Classes meet every **Wednesday night from 6 PM - 9 PM**. There will be two Saturdays where we will be going outside and learning. The deadline for applications is **January 14**. We need 10 students to form a class. So, the sooner we get your application, the sooner we can guarantee that there will be a class. **The cost is $110**

Master Gardeners contributed more than 1442 volunteer hours last year and are on pace to do the same in 2018

What does it take to be a Master Gardener?

- Master Gardeners are volunteers
- You don't need to know everything about gardening. We will teach you.
- You will receive 50 hrs. of classroom and hands-on training
- You will be required to volunteer 50 hrs. in our garden projects over the coming year.
- Yearly requirements to remain a Master Gardener: learning (10 hrs) and volunteer service (20 hrs)

How to apply

- Come into the Extension office and pick up an application **or**
- Go online to **http://go.osu.edu/mg-app**
- Do not pay anything until January.

Japanese Stiltgrass

Alabama Extension

Japanese stiltgrass (Microstegium vimineum), also called Nepalese browntop, is an aggressive invader of forest lands throughout the eastern United States. Infestations can impact the diversity of native species, reduce wildlife habitat, and disrupt important ecosystem functions. Stiltgrass is considered one of the most damaging invasive plant species in the United States. Infestations spread rapidly and the seed can remain viable in the soil for up to five years.

Identification

Stiltgrass is a weak rooted and sprawling annual grass that can grow to heights of 6 feet, though it is usually much shorter. Taller plants typically lie flat along the ground or propped up against other vegetation. Plants usually have multiple weak stems, with aerial rootlets near the base, giving rise to the common name 'stiltgrass'. The leaves are short with smooth edges and a noticeable silvery midrib on older leaves. The flowers and fruits are borne on thin spikes on the top of a delicate stem. In the fall, the tops of the plant turn purple or brown in color, giving this plant one of its other common

Japanese Stiltgrass Leaf with silver midrib and in winter

names, Nepalese browntop. In winter, the thatch is a distinct bright tan to orange color.

There has been an increased awareness of this invasive during 2018. We will publish more information on identification as we move into the 2019 growing season.

Focus on Athens Agriculture

Vest Berries with Rick Vest—*by Lindsey Brighton*

Rick Vest, of Vest Berries farm, had a record sweet potato crop this year. The two largest specimens weigh 13 and 14 pounds each! They are Beauregard traditional orange variety; and the other big ones are Murasaki white sweet potatoes. His total sweet potato crop yield for this year was 10,000 pounds.

They were planted on May 21 during very good weather. No fertilizer or chemicals were used on the sweet potatoes. According to Rick, this was an exceptional year for sweet potatoes. They got the rain and sunshine needed at just the right times. Rick said he hilled this year's crop extra high – up, fifteen inches. Due to the rainy hurricane season, namely Hurricane Florence, they were dug three weeks later than usual.

Sweet potatoes of all sizes are available at the Athens Farmers Market on Wednesdays and Saturdays, 9am-noon. He also sells wholesale to local restaurants, and takes orders to sell to individuals.

Since the State does not keep official vegetable records, this is an unofficial record sweet potato.

Growing from a young age

Rick began his passion for farming as a young child, as he worked on a truck farm near his hometown of Harrison, Ohio. He moved to Nelsonville to attend Hocking College after high school and never left Athens County. Rick met his future wife, Terry, at Hocking College, and soon began a life together. They have two daughters and four grandchildren. The couple just celebrated 40 years of marriage.

Rick and Terry have owned and operated Vest Berries since the early 1980's. While maintaining the farm, Rick also had a career as a graphic designer at McBee from 1978-2006. After McBee relocated, Rick rekindled his love for farming. He has been farming full-time ever since. During the spring/summer months, they operate a pick-your-own strawberry farm in Stewart, Ohio.

Over the years, Vest Berries has grown to include much more than just their staple crop, strawberries. On any given Saturday, Rick can be seen at the Athens Farmers Market selling carrots, beets, potatoes, lettuce, kale, squash, and berries, among other fruits and vegetables. He is an active member in the local farming community, serving as a member on the Athens Farmers Market executive committee, and previously on CFI's Board of Directors.

For those who know Rick, they know what a lively spirit he has. He enjoys talking to people and socializing with fellow farmers at the market. He is a hard-working family-man who would give the shirt off his back for anyone in need. His family is proud of his accomplishments in the community and appreciate the recognition of his gigantic sweet potatoes.

Giving Back

Vest Berries put in a call to the Community Food Initiative's Harvest Hotline for help harvesting all of this year's sweet potato crop. Together, they yielded approximately 700 pounds of Yukon potatoes and 1,100 pounds of sweet potatoes that may have gone to waste, but instead has gone to feed people facing food insecurity.

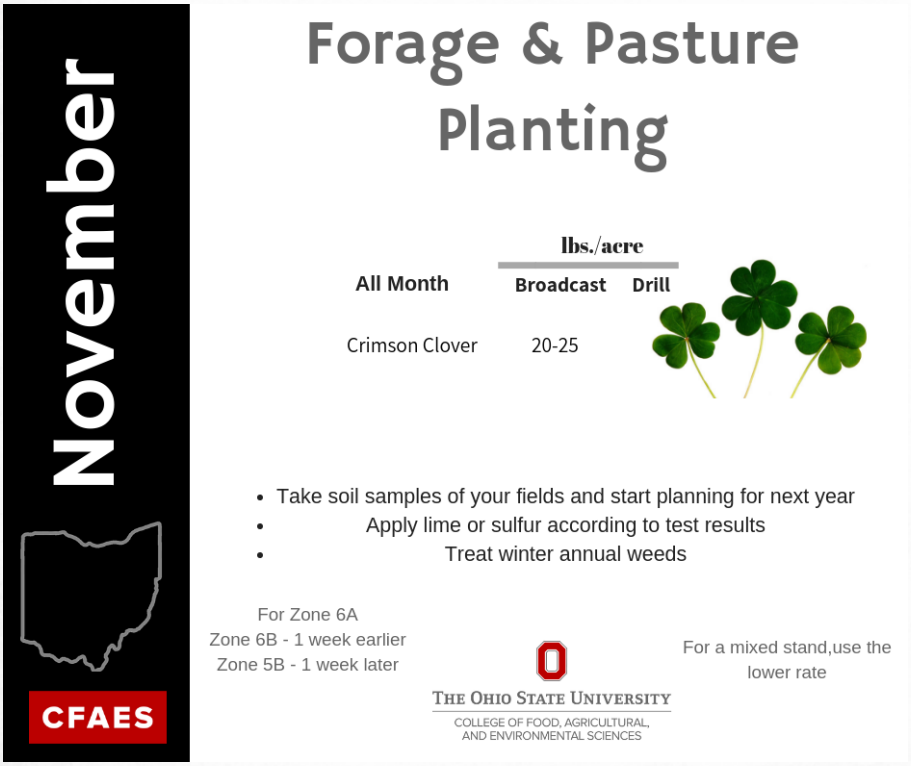
Rick Vest with his sizable sweet potato crop

Beef Quality Assurance and Grazing Council

As part of the Athens Grazing Council's next meeting, we will be presenting a session on beef Quality Assurance (BQA). This is a one hour class that will qualify a producer to sell at BQA sales. The class will be held at the Athens County Extension Office, 280 W. Union St., Athens, OH. We will begin at 6 PM. There is no cost for the class and there will be a potluck in conjunction with the meeting. So, bring your favorite dish and get BQA certified.

Starting January 1, several restaurants and food retailers will require that their beef comes from BQA certified producers. Some sale barns will only take BQA certified cattle or dock cattle that are not certified. BQA is a set of standards for safely and humanely handling cattle. It also provides recommendations for properly administering vaccinations and procedures for administering medical care for animals that both help the cattle and protect the safety of the public when consuming beef products. Most youth showing cattle have been required to follow these same standards for many years and parents will recognize the training material.

The certification lasts for 5 years and can be renewed online.



Calendar of Events

Please contact Ed Brown for additional information on all of these events brown.600@osu.edu or

740-593-8555

- **November 17**– Industrial Hemp Farm Summit, Delaware County Fairgrounds, 11 AM—4:00 PM Cost $20. RSVP on Facebook Events "Industrial Hemp Farm Summit"
- **November 30 - December 1** Buckeye Shephard's Symposium, OARDC, Wooster, OH
- **December 3 –** Beef Quality Assurance, Athens Extension Office . Call Ed at (740) 593-8555 to RSVP
- **January 9-10** - Ohio Hop Conference, Columbus
- **February 6 – Apr. 24 –** Master Gardener Volunteer Training

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL,
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

Athens County Extension
280 W. Union St.
Athens, OH 45701
Phone: 740-593-8555
Fax: 740-592-1113
Brown.6000@osu.edu

The Last Word

It's always a challenge to decide what goes into the newsletter each time. There is always so much good information out there and I am never sure what readers find the most relevant and useful. I was pleasantly surprised when I received a call from Lindsey Brighton about the rather large sweet potatoes grown by Rick Vest. That provided for a great opportunity to highlight a farm in the county. Not only did she let know about the massive veggies, she wrote up the article and submitted the pictures that were published on these pages. I would love to highlight more farms. I know that there is a lot of hard work going on in our area that people are unaware of. If you know of a farm that would make for a great story, let me know or write up some information and will get them published on these pages. With over 700 farms being claimed in the county, there should be enough material to last for the rest of my career.

Soybean harvest on the farm this year.