



**NC COOPERATIVE EXTENSION  
WEEKLY UPDATE  
Week Ending 9/26/08**

1. Items for Approval – None this week.
2. Items for Discussion – None this week.
3. Summary of County Visits by Dr. Jon Ort

DATE	COUNTY VISITED	PURPOSE
9/14/08 – 9/19/08	Indianapolis, IN	Galaxy III Conference and ECOP Meeting
9/22/08	Harnett County	Back Home Visit with Congressman Bob Etheridge

4. Items for Information

- Swine farms permitted under the NC Division of Environment and Natural Resources are required to operate anaerobic lagoons under Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) standards. The operation and maintenance standard of NRCS’s technical guide requires anaerobic lagoons to maintain four feet of sludge free treatment depth. This standard penalizes shallow lagoons and lacked scientific support. Working with our NC State University Professor in Biological and Agricultural Engineering, 15 swine lagoons in Sampson County were evaluated for lagoon function based on depth of sludge-free treatment area. As a result of this study, NRCS changed their lagoon standard to 50% of treatment volume sludge free. Approximately 1,000 lagoons in North Carolina will benefit from this change by extended lagoon function without sludge removal and remain in the methane phase longer with improved odor control. Based on sludge removal costs, approximately \$20 million in clean out costs will be deferred for several years allowing producers more time to manage these expenses.
- Determining peanut maturity and digging at the optimum time is one of the many management decisions peanut farmers make each year. To help farmers determine the optimum time to dig, peanut pod blasting clinics were held and farmers brought a sample from each field. The outer layer of the peanuts was removed with a pressure washer and maturity was determined. Five maturity clinics were held in Martin County and 132 samples were checked for 39 farmers. This represented 5,797 acres of peanuts. Research shows that yields can be increased by about 19 pounds per acre per day when peanuts are dug at the optimum time. By following Cooperative Extension’s recommendations from the maturity clinics, farmers were able to increase their gross income by about \$300,000 by digging at the optimum time.
- Physical inactivity and poor eating habits cause 400,000 deaths each year in the U.S. Families are eating more meals away from home. The result is too many calories, too much fat, and too few fruits and vegetables. To empower families to consume more healthy meals at home, our NC Cooperative Extension Family and Consumer Science Agent in Watauga County offered a six-week healthy cooking school at a local church kitchen. Working in groups of two, participants prepared healthy recipes in the categories of healthy soups, appetizers, salads, meats, vegetarian meals, 20-minute meals and baking. By the end of the school, 86% of participants reported cooking more healthy meals at home and 72% reported eating more fruits and vegetables each day. These health promoting behaviors will result in a higher quality, longer life for these families.

- NC Cooperative Extension Catawba County assisted 30 beef producers in organizing the first local Beef Quality Assurance Graded Feeder Calf Sale on August 14, 2008. Cooperative Extension held three informational and planning sessions with producers, market operators and NCDA marketing staff to define the vaccination protocol and weaning requirements. Cooperative Extension staff helped schedule the processing and electronic ID of calves for age and source verification. Of the 723 calves that were marketed, Cooperative Extension captured performance data and preconditioning costs on 150 calves from 6 different farms. Based on that data, the participating producers received an additional premium of \$77 per head over the value of the same calves sold at weaning for a net total increase in income of \$55,671 (after preconditioning expenses).

5. Routine Items – None this week.