



**NC COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
WEEKLY UPDATE
Week Ending 11/7/08**

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
	None this week.	

4. Items for Information

- In 2007, the pregnancy rate in Cumberland County for teens ages 15-19 was 72.7 pregnancies per 1,000 girls, compared to 107.8 per 1,000 in 1998. In 1998, NC Cooperative Extension collaborated with Cumberland County Schools to implement the *Baby Think It Over* Program to males and females between the ages of 10-18. The students explore the emotional, financial, physical, and social consequences of teen parenting by caring for an infant simulator. In 2007, the program had to come to a stop due to obsolete dolls. The county saw the need to continue this program and provided a \$16,000 grant to Extension’s budget to purchase 30 new dolls. A total of 3,310 students have participated in this program. According to the questionnaire, over eighty percent indicated the program helped reinforce their decision to wait to have children.
- Using pesticides is a necessary tool utilized by farmers, turf managers, homeowners and various public and commercial applicators. Inevitably, excess pesticides remain unused each year. As a proactive measure to prevent undesirable leaks, spills, or disposal methods, NC Cooperative in Swain County cooperated with NCDCA and Swain County government to collect 4,805 pounds of unused pesticides. In addition, a ¾ full tank mix of Methyl Bromide and Chloropicrin had been sitting at the Swain Recycling Center for 2-3 years. Alerted by the Swain County Extension Agent, a local strawberry grower gratefully picked up the fumigant tank mix for use on his farm. The recycled tank mix saved the grower approximately \$700 as well as saving NCDCA the disposal fee.
- The cost of growing tobacco increases each year with profit margins decreasing. Variety selection is the most important step to obtaining high yields and increasing profitability. According to the official variety tests, above average yielding varieties, yield 262 pounds per acre more than below average yielding varieties. In Wilson County, NC Cooperative Extension addressed tobacco variety selection through the Wilson County Tobacco Meeting, newsletters, distribution of publications and through one-on-one discussions with growers and agricultural dealers. Through these efforts, Wilson County tobacco growers planted above average yielding varieties on 7,778 acres in 2008. This is an increase of 1,934 acres in high yielding varieties since 2006. With an average selling price of \$1.83, Wilson County growers increased gross farm income by \$927,276 through variety selection.

- While visiting a local drug store, our Family and Consumer Science Agent in Person County was asked by drug store personnel to assist one of their clients with their Medicare Drug plan. The couple at the drive up window, who was mentally challenged, had been visited by an insurance salesman who changed them into a Medicare Advantage (MA) plan, even though the clients told the salesman they did not want to change their insurance. The medications that were normally covered by the husband's previous plan were subject to prior approval with the MA plan, and therefore more difficult for the client to obtain. After visiting with the couple twice in their home and calling Medicare, the couple was switched back to their original drug coverage and was once again satisfied with their coverage. A savings of \$300 per month was realized by the switch.
- Addressing the healthcare needs of today's aging population is important to providing quality healthcare for a population age 65 and over, which is approximately 12.4 percent of the total population (National Center for Health Statistics, www.cdc.gov/nchs/hus.htm). The Centers for Disease Control identifies the management of chronic diseases, such as diabetes and hypertension, as a national health priority for older adults. NC Cooperative Extension in Gaston County partnered with the Gaston County Senior Center to provide an 8-week nutrition and physical activity program titled *Seniors Eating Smart, Moving More*, which is designed for senior citizens. Fifteen participants attended 5 or more weekly sessions. Participants reported as a result of this program that they are getting at least 30 minutes of physical activity a day (78%), reading food labels to make smarter choices (57%), eating the recommended servings of fruits and vegetables (71%), and drinking fewer sugar-sweetened beverages (93%). This program will be offered again in Spring 2009.
- Fertilizer prices essentially doubled in 2008 from the previous year. These prices decreased profitability for tobacco producers. In Wilson County, NC Cooperative Extension addressed fertilization efficiency through using fertilizers with low or no phosphorus. Research conducted on tobacco has documented that when tobacco is planted in fields with high phosphorus levels, normal yields are produced without additional phosphorus. Using a low or no phosphorus fertilizer blend on tobacco would save growers \$50 per acre. Growers used these blends on 56 percent of the tobacco acreage, or 5,236 acres, saving \$261,800 in fertilizer expense. Wilson County is also located in the Neuse and Tar River basins, which are nutrient sensitive river basins. These changes in fertilizer practices reduced phosphorus application by 209,440 pounds.
- The 2008 NC State Board of Education reported a drop out rate of 5.24 percent, which is the highest in five years. At the same time, research shows a 25 percent growth in careers in the environmental science fields. Rowan and Wilkes County, NC Cooperative Extension personnel trained 50 adult volunteers the program *Nuts and Bolts of DNA*, a hands-on science program. As a result of this programming, 98 percent reported knowledge gained in the area of biotechnology, and 88 percent reported they would share the information learned with others.
- NC Prevention Partners (<http://www.ncpreventionpartners.org/>) calculates that obesity and poor nutrition cost NC employers an average of \$1,474 per employee per year. The costs are high in Gaston County, where only 18% of adults eat 5 or more daily servings of fruits and vegetables (BRSS 2005, www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com). In 2008, NC Cooperative Extension partnered with the Gaston County Employee Wellness Committee to offer a 9-week program challenging County employees to increase their consumption of fruit and vegetables. Of the 46 employees who completed the challenge, 88% reported they increased their consumption of fruits and vegetables, and 96% reported making healthier food choices. This program is helping County government achieve its goal of reducing health care costs and will be repeated again in the coming year.

- A homeowner thought he was going to have to replace vinyl siding on the northern side of his home because he was unsuccessful at removing what he thought to be mold off his vinyl siding house. Brown stains remained on the vinyl siding after he pressure washed his house. Instead of it being mold, it turned out to be a fungus. Because of information gained through Extension, the homeowner now knows not to use mulch when landscaping around his vinyl siding because the mulch is what is harboring the fungus, and he knows how to safely remove the fungus off the side of his house. Thanks to knowledge gained, this client saved approximately \$4,000 by not having to replace his vinyl siding and improved the value and appearance of his home.

5. Routine Items – None this week.