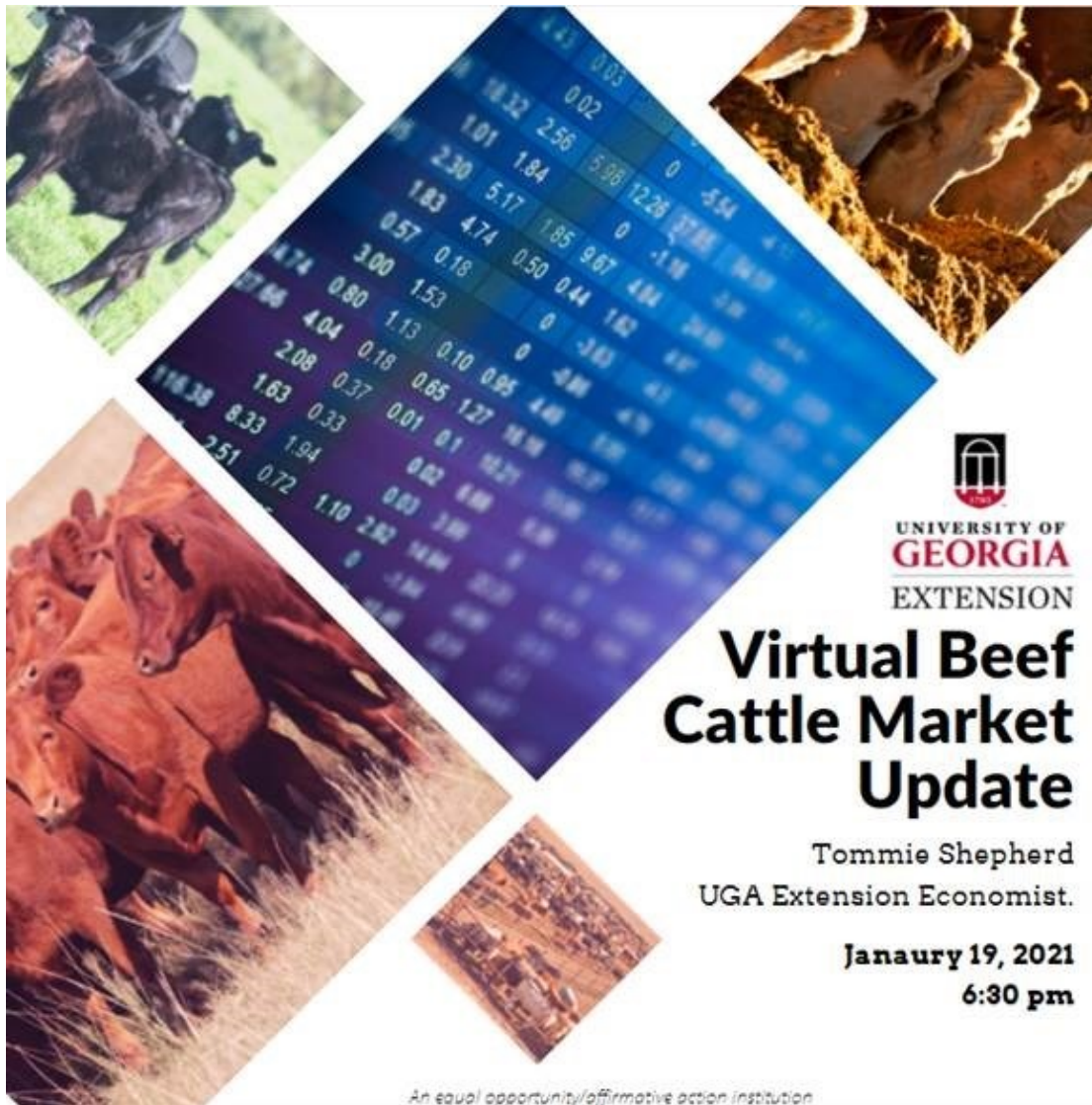


THE WALTON CATTLEMEN

The Walton Cattlemen Association



January 2021



Upcoming Meeting

January 19

RSVP by

Tuesday
January 19
11:30

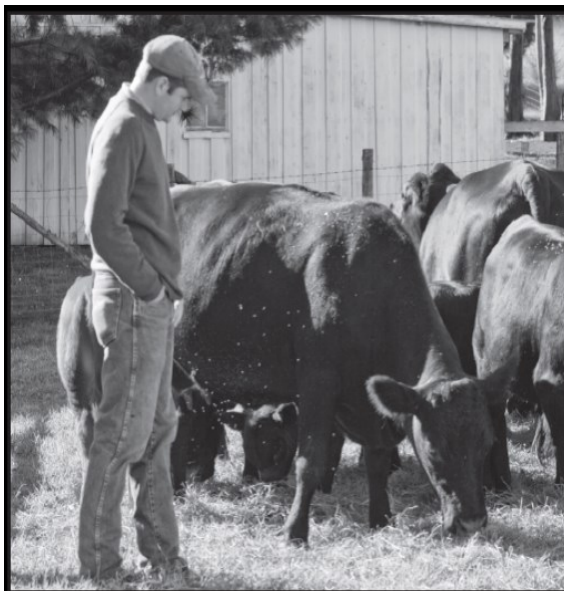
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Dinner \$10

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Join in virtually to hear UGA Extension Economist Tommie Shepherd give a Beef Cattle Market Update on January 19th at 6:30 pm

https://zoom.us/join/joinMeeting/register/tJEucemvrz8tGd3i7w_ST6dGv7jFyEK7gtB3?fbclid=IwAR1NyQQF2918CU16KA91oVSL1qZv7bIJJoY_Nx63LriYoHt9VhRO8m3mq8xg



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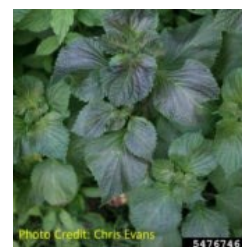
Be on the lookout: Charlotte's top ten toxic weeds

By Charlotte Meeks

Houston County

While there are over 600 species of weeds that can be labeled as poisonous plants, we are going to focus on my top ten that can be found in our pastures in Georgia. Most grazing animals will not eat poisonous plants unless they are forced to do so by some unusual or artificial condition. Conditions leading to ingestion include lack of good forage (due to drought or overgrazing), deficient rations, and newly cultivated areas. These plants can be especially problematic for our livestock that prefer to browse, or just the ones that are inquisitive. When ingested, poisonous plants can have a wide range of effects – causing chemical or physiological disturbances.

1. **Black Cherry** (*Prunus serotina*) is a medium size tree often seen growing on fencerows. All livestock can be affected; however, ruminants are more susceptible. Livestock may begin showing signs of poisoning within 15 to 30 minutes after consumption. One of the most common signs of poisoning is bright red mucous membranes and blood.
2. **Chinaberry** (*Melia azedarach*) is a small to medium sized tree with a light purple and white flower. Once a popular ornamental tree, this invasive plant can now be found along fence rows, roadsides, waste areas, and around buildings. Swine and sheep are most susceptible, but all livestock can be affected when consumed in large amounts. Signs include stomach irritation, vomiting, bloody diarrhea, paralysis, irregular breathing, and trouble breathing.
3. **Horsenettle** (*Solanum carolinense*) is a perennial weed of the nightshade family. This is a thorny weed that contains a green/yellow fruit that resembles a tomato. It is common throughout the South in pastures and hayfields. All grazing animals can be affected. Signs include weakness, excess salivation, shortness of breath, trembling, progressive paralysis, acute hemorrhagic gastroenteritis, collapse, and death.
4. **Johnsongrass** (*Sorghum halepense*) is a coarse perennial grass that can grow up to 8 feet tall. This grass is found throughout the South in fields, waste areas, and along fence rows. Johnsongrass is generally a high -quality forage that is safe to graze. The problem lies after a significant stress event – extreme drought or frost. Prussic acid accumulates in the plant after drought or frost and can be toxic. All livestock can be affected, but ruminants are most susceptible. Signs include difficulty breathing, anxious or staggering, collapse, and convulsions before death. Bright red color of mucous membranes and blood are another sign of consumption. Often if the animal show signs 15-30 minutes after consumption, they may die within the hour.
5. **Perilla Mint** (*Perilla frutescens*) is a low growing annual that produces a strong odor when crushed. This weed can be found in pastures, fields, along the roadside, and old home sites. Horses and cattle are the most susceptible, but all livestock can be affected. Hay containing perilla mint, can cause birth defects in calves during early gestation. Signs occur 2-10 days after exposure and include labored breathing, lowering head, reluctance to move, and death on exertion. Pulmonary emphysema and edema are also signs.
6. **Pokeweed** (*Phytolacca Americana*) is a perennial herb that can grow up to 9 feet. It is well known for the dark purple to black berries it produces. It is most commonly found on waste areas, fence rows, pastures, and old home sites. Pokeweed affects most livestock. Signs include vomiting, abdominal pain, bloody diarrhea, breakdown of red blood cells, drop in milk production, convulsions, and death from respiratory failure. Most animals recover within 24- 48 hours after removal from source. Post mortem often reveals ulcerative gastritis, mucosal hemorrhage, and dark liver.
7. **Rhododendrons and Azaleas** (*Rhododendron* spp.) are naturally found in the Appalachian Mountains, but are a common ornamental shrub in many Southern landscapes. Ruminants are most susceptible, but horses and other monogastric animals can



(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

be affected but are less likely to consume. Signs include bloating, salivation, vomiting, and abdominal pain. Eventually the animal will grow weak, stagger and become prostrate.

8. **Dallisgrass Ergot** (*Claviceps paspali* on *Paspalum dilatatum*) is a fungal mass that grows on the seedhead of dallisgrass. It begins as a tan/orange, round mass and becomes black and shrunken. Dallisgrass Ergot affects all grazing animals. Signs can occur 3 days after consumption. Affected livestock can exhibit "stagger," or lack of coordination when walking, or not be able to get back up after laying down. Death is usually rare.
9. **Ground Cherry** (*Physalis* spp.) can be an annual or perennial herb. The fruit/berry on the plant is surrounded by a papery sac. While technically the fruit can be consumed when fully ripe, it is toxic when still green. This weed can be found on the edge of fields and disturbed areas. All grazing animals are susceptible. Signs include weakness, excess salivation, shortness of breath, trembling, progressive paralysis, acute hemorrhagic gastroenteritis, collapses and death.
10. **Sneezeweed** (*Helenium* spp.) is an annual or perennial herb with yellow flowers. This weed is found throughout the South with Autumn sneezeweed being more common in the Piedmont and Bitter sneezeweed more common in the Coastal Plains. All livestock can be affected, but sheep are the most susceptible. Signs include severe irritation to the mucous membranes, dullness, trembling, restlessness, stiff gait, salivation, and weakness. Also called "spewing sickness," severe vomiting and possible inhaling of regurgitated material may cause pneumonia.

On a more positive note, if pastures and hay fields are well managed, many weeds can be suppressed or eliminated. Be sure to scout your fields, pastures, and fence lines for noxious weeds. Soil sample your pastures and hay fields to know your fertilizer and lime recommendations before application. Ensure your pastures are not being overgrazed or under grazed. Consider "rational" or rotational grazing in pastures. For hay fields, make sure you are cutting at the recommend height for your forage species. There are also many herbicides that can be implemented into your program to help control these weeds. Contact your local county extension agent or forage team member for more information.

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Make your forage new year's resolutions

By Roger Gates, Whitfield County

A survey reported online recently by 'Progressive Cattle' asked cattlemen what aspect of their management they would most like to improve. By a wide margin, "Grazing" was identified as the item that benefit from an upgrade.

Many producers recognize intuitively how influential grazing management can be on the success of a livestock operation. Perhaps unfortunately, no one is paid directly for the productivity of pastures, so the incentives for improvement are more remote than attention given to livestock management.

"There's always next year" will always be a true statement, but with the new year upon us, it's a common practice to resolve to improve an aspect of behavior or activity in the year to come. Recognizing how difficult change is, it would be wise to focus on fewer items so that they can be kept in mind, rather than a long list that will quickly lose attention.

Any planning process benefits from an assessment of current conditions and circumstances. If an inventory of grazing resources is not up to date and easily accessible, completing one might be a very helpful first resolution. A simple pasture/field map with accurate acreage and improvements (fence and water) recorded would be a good first step. Additional information, such as forage species and condition, soil test results, fertilization and weed control records, will further enhance planning efforts.

If improved grazing management is a goal, grazing records will be essential. The critical information is: how many? When? And How long? Those records will allow calculation of a measure of productivity such as animal days per acre.

Another important inventory item is a survey of pasture conditions. A pasture scorecard, such as those available from NRCS can simplify assessing pasture conditions, such as the presence of desirable and undesirable species, ground cover or bare ground and the presence and location of "trouble spots." A scorecard also promotes the repeatability of observations. Evaluating and improving grazing management requires some measurement that can be duplicated over time in order to identify improvements that are being made or help understand if progress is not occurring.

Another resolution that might be easy to make involves the management of forage when grazing is not involved. Because conserved and supplemental feed is expensive, a reasonable resolution would be to make the grazing season as long as possible. Initiating or improving a rotational grazing plan, increasing the diversity of desirable pasture species or being intentional about plans for stockpiling could all increase the duration of the grazing season and limit winter feed expenditures.

The other aspect of supplying winter feed that would benefit from attention and planning is harvesting, storing and allocating hay (or baleage). Harvesting forage in order to maximize yield is rarely the most cost effective. Waiting for a forage crop to provide the highest yield nearly always leads to greater delay than intended.

Delaying cutting date results in more mature forage and decreased nutritional value. The "bottom line" of animal production suffers from inadequate nutrition or is more expensive due to the cost of needed supplemental feed. The only way to know the nutritional value of conserved feed is to sample and analyze. There may be no more certain "return on investment" than using the results of a hay test to plan winter feeding.

If improved grazing and forage production would be beneficial in 2021, consider adopting and implementing one or more of these beneficial practices:

- Pasture inventory
- Pasture use records
- Sticking to a plan for timely hay harvest
- Taking and using hay tests

None of these practices will be helpful from if only used once, so the best resolution would include a promise to yourself to maintain helpful practices. Change is never easy, but can be beneficial. Attitudes are very important to successful change. In the wise words of one of my farmer heroes: "If you think you can or If you think you can't... you're right!"

Meeting Agenda

- Dinner at 7:00
- Meeting 7:30
- Opening comments
- Reading of minutes from last meeting
- Treasurer report
- Old Business
- New Business
- Speaker
- Q and A

Speaker

Greg Pittman, Jackson County ANR Agent

Topic: Alfalfa

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