

## Successful Winter Forage Conferences Held in January

The week of January 16 was a time for many of the VFGC board and leadership to tour the western half of Virginia conducting the 2012 Winter Forage Conferences. The theme this year was *Integrated Weed Management: Putting Science into Practice*. Total attendance was more than 480 farmers, agribusiness, and agency employees all having an opportunity to hear from nationally recognized speakers. The conference was held in Wytheville and Weyers Cave and in two new locations Gordonsville and Chatham at Olde Dominion Agricultural Complex.

Kathy Voth of Livestock for Landscapes made two presentations, complete with videos demonstrating that animals will learn to eat weeds and maintain body condition on a mixed diet of forages and weeds. She demonstrates how to incorporate animal behavior principles defined by Ivan Pavlov and B.F. Skinner’s into clear instruction. In short she said, “Pavlov discovered that developing a routine with animals creates behaviors they will repeat; and Skinner used rewards to encourage animals to do things they wouldn’t ordinarily do.” She illustrated that cattle and sheep can be conditioned and rewarded to eat a multitude of weeds not normally consider palatable. With the use of videos, she demonstrated that once a female is trained their offspring will learn that behavior, thus transferring it to the next generation and the herd or flock. The overall caution, often repeated, “know your weeds.” Ms. Voth’s web site has a listing of weeds that are safe and ones to avoid (<http://livestockforlandscapes.com/answers.htm>).

Scott Hagood provided timely information on judicious and appropriate use of herbicides in pastures and hay. Understand-

is the key to controlling weeds and wise financial use of a costly input. Critical to success of any weed control program is identification of the plant in question. To start the identification process see the VA Tech Weed Guide at <http://www.ppws.vt.edu/weedindex.htm> for high quality images of most common weeds in the East.

Chris Teutsch presented information on *An Integrated Approach to Weed Control in Pastures*. The key takeaway points are; know your species, soil test, fertilizer and lime appropriately, rotationally stock to spread manure and urine, incorporated legumes in all grass pastures, and use manures and biosolids when possible.

At each site local producers made presentation on their approach to managing pastures, animals, and fertility to economically manage weeds to support their farm business. Participants heard from Joe Reasor a Wythe county beef and goat producer, James Wenger an Augusta County organic dairy farmer, Gary Lantz a Shenandoah county organic beef producer, Terry Ingram Culpeper County organic dairy farmer, and Greg Wade a Halifax County beef and meat goat producer.

If you missed the 2012 conferences then visit the Southern Piedmont Agricultural Research and Extension Center Forages web site at <http://www.ares.vaes.vt.edu/southern-piedmont-forages/index.html> where Chris Teutsch will post all the presentations, in due time.

Finally, a special thanks to all the speakers, VFGC members, VCE, NRCS, and SWCD personnel, sponsors and local support that made the conferences a success.



Pictures above left and right, Kathy Voth discusses grazing weeds at VFGC Winter Conferences that where held around the state.

Bottom left, participants at the Weyers Cave location listen intently to conference presenters.

## Charles Fugate VFGC’s Producer of the Year

Fugate Farms began in 1814, producing beef cattle, hogs, hay/pasture, corn, and tobacco. The farm is located near Natural Tunnel Park in Rye Cove, Virginia. The current operation consists of about 500 acres and is owned and operated by Charles W. Fugate. The majority of the land is owned with a small amount leased. Mr. Fugate graduating with a B.S. degree in business from Emory and Henry and later a Masters in Business Administration from Appalachian State. After completing his masters he farmed on weekends and held down a full time job with the Westmorland Coal Company in Big Stone Gap. Now retired, he spends most of his daylight hours nurturing the land, working his cattle, mending fences, and battling cedars.

His forages include 20 acres of corn for silage, 350 acres of primarily fescue and clove pasture, and 130 acres of mixed grass hay. The majority of the cattle are Angus or crosses with Charolais and Hereford. A rotational grazing system was created with a cleverly designed fencing system that allows pastures to recover both above ground and below ground growth between exposures to grazing. Stock pile forages are used by leaving the last cutting of hay on some land and only cutting some hay fields once.

Large round bales are made and stored in barns to maintain quality and reduce losses from exposure to the elements. Round bales are fed with a un-roller and targeted to poorer ground. Round bales are never unrolled on the same spot in a season. All fields are limed and fertilized according to a nutrient management plan tailored to this specific operation.

Mr. Fugate is involved with state and federal conservation programs including nutrient management, cover crops, and the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). Through the process of nutrient management planning, Mr. Fugate realized he could save money by cutting back on lime since his pH was relatively high. He used the savings to build phosphate in the soil. With cover crops he was able to keep a cover on his crop land though the winter, reducing soil erosion and scavenging nutrients. With funding from the CREP he fenced cattle out of ponds, planted tree buffers, and installed a water system, improving water quality on and downstream of his farm.

Mr. Fugate contributes to his community being actively involved in his church, the Optimist Club, and his grandchildren’s activities. Annually he hosts hayrides and picnics on his farm. Mr. Fugate received his award at the VFGC Winter conference held at Wytheville and made a brief presentation to the crowd about his farming activity.



Charles Fugate and his daughter received the VFGC 2012 Producer of the Year award along with a \$500.00 cash award sponsored by Evergreen Seed.



Scott Hagood, Virginia Tech’s weed specialist, updates the conferences participants on the proper use of pesticides on an ingredient weed control program for pastures.



David Fiske, VFGC treasury registers participants at the Chatham location of the 2012 Winter Conference.



# Gaining Ground

By: J. B. Daniel

A farming revolution is spreading across Virginia. Live-stock Farmers are switching to rotational grazing and crop producers are switching to No-till systems. Both approaches save farmers time and money. They also benefit the land, restoring soil health and dramatically cutting runoff and soil erosion. The net result is more profitable and productive farms – and better water quality downstream. In two 15 minute movies released by Virginia USDA-NRCS and its conservation partners on October 24, a dozen Virginia farmers explain how managed grazing and continuous no-till improved their farms and their lives. You will see familiar faces as most of the livestock producers in the grazing movie are VFGC members. Also featured are amazing soil and water demonstrations that show how these farmers are truly gaining ground.

You can view these movies at [www.GainingGroundVirginia.org](http://www.GainingGroundVirginia.org) or at your local NRCS, Soil and Water Conservation District, or Cooperative Extension offices. If you have a group that would like to view the movies contact one of the above office in your area, CD’s and larger screens are available.

## Horsemanship front page

practical approaches to behavioral problems in the afternoon session.

Chris Teutsch, Associate Professor and Forage Specialist at Virginia Tech’s Southern Piedmont Agricultural Research and Extension Center, will discuss grazing systems for small acreage horse owners. Dr. Teutsch will discuss the both the economical and environmental importance of maintaining a healthy horse pasture and offer practical approaches to doing it. In the afternoon hands on session he will discuss equipment, forage species, and techniques for establishing horse pastures.

Marty Adams, equine nutritionist and horse feed manager for Southern States, will discuss designing a nutritional program for your horse. Dr. Adams will review nutritional requirements of your horse at different stages of their life and provide practical advice for meeting those requirements.

Theresa McManus of Keymon Farms will be discussing the foundations of riding. Theresa has trained horses and riders for over 30 years and has a unique style that she learned when she lived abroad in Spain. This style stresses the balance and communication between horse and rider. Theresa currently trains horses and riders in the regions surrounding her Buckingham County farm.

Deborah Crane will be demonstrating equine massage techniques in an outdoor hands on session following lunch. Deborah’s approach to working with the horse may be considered by some to be a bit "out of the box". It focuses on listening to the horse and being cognizant of the subtle signs that they are communicating. Deborah has certifications and training in the following areas: integrated bodywork for high performance horses, equine sports massage therapy, equine digital thermal imaging, animal communications, and equine acupressure.



Brandy Phelps, DVM, will discuss emergency and preventative medicine for your horse in an outdoor setting following lunch. Dr. Phelps was born and raised in Eastern North Carolina. She completed her Bachelor’s Degree in Animal Science in 2002 and graduated from North Carolina State University College of Veterinary Medicine in 2006. Dr. Phelps began Hoofbeats Equine Service, LLC, located in Jetersville, VA in 2009. Her practice combines traditional approaches with gentle techniques for the most comprehensive horse care in the central and southern regions of Virginia.



An advanced pre-registration fee of \$10 per adult is being charged to help to offset meal and speaker costs. All preregistered youth under the age of 18 years old can attend at no cost. Preregistrations must be post-marked by March 30, 2012. Registration the day of the event will be \$15 for adults and \$5 for youth. All youth MUST be accompanied by ADULT!!!

All paid participants over the age of 18 will receive a coupon for a free bag of horse feed complements of Southern States Cooperative. This conference is a joint effort of the Virginia Forage and Grassland Council and Virginia Cooperative Extension and is being supported by a grant from the Virginia Horse Industry Board. For more information on this conference and how to pre-register please visit the VFGC’s website at [www.vaforges.org](http://www.vaforges.org) or contact Margaret Kenny at [makenny@vt.edu](mailto:makenny@vt.edu) or 434-292-5331.

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## Upcoming Events

**April 7, 2012**  
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[www.vaforges.org](http://www.vaforges.org)

**April 20-22, 2012**  
Virginia Beef Expo, Harrisonburg, VA  
[www.vacattlemen.org](http://www.vacattlemen.org)

**May 17, 2012**  
AFGC Annual Tour  
[www.afgc.org](http://www.afgc.org)

**September 9, 2012**  
Family and Farm Day  
Blackstone, VA  
434-292-5331

**January 9-11, 2013**  
AFGC Annual Conference  
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Harlan E. White Scholarship

The Harlan E. White Scholarship, established by the Virginia Forage and Grassland Council, for undergraduate students studying the promotion and better understanding of forages and grasslands in Virginia is now available for the first time. Applications are available on the Virginia Tech College of Agriculture and Life Sciences website, <http://www.cses.vt.edu/current-students/Scholarships/undergrad-scholarships-cses.html> .



Application forms open November 15 and close March 1 unless otherwise noted. Scholarships are awarded per academic year to students enrolled full-time (12 credit hours or more per semester) in the Department of Crop and Soil Environmental Sciences or in the Agricultural Technology Program. Please see the above website for details and additional requirements.

The Virginia Forage and Grassland Council continues to seek your assistance in honoring the life of Dr. Harlan E. White. The Dr. Harlan E. White Memorial Scholarship Fund has been established by the Virginia Forage and Grassland Council and will be used for scholarships, like the one now available; however the fund needs to grow to offer more and larger scholarships.

Dr. White dedicated his life to Virginia’s forage industry. It is now time for us, the recipients of these good works, to dedicate ourselves and share some of the great gifts that Harlan bestowed upon us.

The Virginia Forage and Grassland Council is accepting funds from corporate and individual donors that wish to honor Dr. White. The goal is to establish a permanent endowment to provide scholarships to support Virginia forage education and research. VFGC has an ambitious plan to raise \$50,000 by 2013, and \$500,000 by 2015. The fund will be managed and administered by the Virginia Forage and Grassland Council Board of Directors. All funds will be audited on an annual basis and shall be dedicated to the sole purpose of the Scholarship Fund.

We are asking for your financial support in this endeavor and welcome all donations in any amount. The following categories will be recognized. Platinum Medallion, \$10,000 or more; Gold Medallion, \$1,000 – 10,000; Silver Medallion, \$500 – \$1000; Bronze Medallion, \$100 – \$500; and Friends of the Fund, under \$100.

Your contributions qualify as a charitable contribution because VFGC administers the Fund and is a 501 (c)(3) organization. Additional information and donation forms are available at the VFGC website, <http://vaforages.org/scholarship/>, and at VFGC meetings and conferences.

VFGC to Hold Fencing Schools

The Virginia Forage and Grassland Council will again this spring be holding three producer fencing schools. The dates and locations are:

- **March 14** - Olde Dominion Ag Complex, 19783 US Highway 29, Chatham, VA 24531 – Local contact: Jamie Stowe, Pittsylvania County Extension Office (434) 432-7770
- **March 22** – Bethlehem United Methodist Church, 7539 Patrick Henry Highway. Roseland, Virginia 22967 – Local contact: Billy Hughes, Amherst County Extension Office (434) 946-9365
- **March 28** – Southwest Virginia 4-H Center, 25236 Hillman Highway, Abingdon, VA 24210 – Local contact: Phil Blevins, Washington County Extension Office (276) 676-6309

The schools will feature all fencing systems, with special emphasis on electrified smooth wire high tensile fencing and high tensile fixed knot woven wire fencing. The instructors for these schools have over 75 years of combined fencing experience and include Lewis Sapp of Stay-Tuff Fence Manufacturing, Billy White of Stay-Tuff Fence Manufacturing, Lee Ellsworth of Gallagher USA, and Rusty Tanner of Tanner’s Fencing.

The morning classroom session will include basic Virginia fence laws, fencing economics, fence types for various livestock classes, cross fences and perimeter fences, brace construction, and fencing design and layout. The afternoon session will be a hands-on session where participants will receive training on constructing braces, tying high tensile fence knots & splices, fence



charger installation, and construction of smooth wire and fixed knot high tensile fencing.

If you are interested in participating make sure to sign up early because space is limited to 30 participants per location and they typically fill up fast. The fencing school agenda and registration form can be found on the Virginia Forage & Grassland Council website at [www.vaforages.org](http://www.vaforages.org). For questions or more information, contact Margaret Kenny at 434-292-5331 or [makenny@vt.edu](mailto:makenny@vt.edu).

Pasture (Grass), the Cattleman’s CROP!

*Note: This is a second reprint from a longer article by Blox Daugherty, look for additional excerpts in future editions of The Forager.*

Grasses need rest and recovery. Cool season perennial grasses need a recovery period of 14 – 20 days in spring and 35 – 45 days in summer, because they grow faster in the cooler days of spring and slower in the heat of summer. The grazing periods should be short enough to prevent grazing of newly emerging tillers. This may be three days in spring and 5 – 7 days in summer. If we divide the recovery period into the grazing period, we get the number of paddocks needed to prevent overgrazing, maximize forage production and create a self sustaining system. Usually, this formula computes to a minimum of seven paddocks. But, you need one more for a sacrifice area because of drought, when it all stops producing. In a drought, go to the sacrifice lot and feed hay until the rains come, and you will save your system. The average cattleman in Rockbridge County has fed hay at least 60 days per year in the recent drought years, whether he overgrazed or not. But the ones who didn’t obliterate their pastures fed a lot less hay in the winter.

Early spring management can pay off for the entire growing season. An Ohio county agent did on farm tests in hayfields by harvesting the first cutting in two different ways: Mowing at the height the farmer typically mowed at (low); and mowing at a height to simulate grazing, at a height of at least four inches. Subsequent mowings were done at the height the farmer customarily used (low). Yields were recorded, and in every case the area that was mowed high at the first cutting yielded better. The differences in the three studies were 800, 1500, and 1600 pounds. Not a bad yield increase for doing no more work or using no more fertilizer. The only variable was taking it easy on the first cutting, and not causing the roots to stop growing.

You’ve got to “get ‘em off” and give the grass a break. The old cliché of “graze half and leave half” had a solid scientific foundation. The “grazing stick” reflects this too, and for most cool season grasses recommends that we start grazing at around 8 to 10 inch grass heights, and remove animals at 2, 3 or 4 inch grass heights. Different grass species can handle different grazing heights: Orchardgrass = 4 inches; Fescue = 3 inches; Bluegrass = 2 inches. That’s because orchardgrass stores its carbohydrate reserves in the bottom four inches, fescue stores its

in the bottom three inches, and bluegrass has underground stolons that store carbohydrates, which animals can’t get to, and can handle lower grazing or mowing heights. Its important to know that if you graze these species lower than these listed heights, you are overgrazing, period. Sometimes we overgraze on purpose, to establish or promote legumes for instance, but during the growing season, setting back the plants is usually not a good idea as yield losses will result.

The benefits of “getting ‘em off” go right to your bottom line. Profitability is a percentage called a “rate of return on assets”. Its equal to volume (how much you sell) times the difference between the price you sell at and the cost to produce it, divided by the value of your assets. For cattlemen, there are only four ways to increase profits: 1) Increase Volume by selling more pounds of beef through more cattle or heavier cattle; 2) Increase Selling Price by selling beef at a higher price per pound; 3) Lower Expenses by reducing the cost of producing the beef: feed, forage, cow management, etc.; and 4) Lower Your Asset Value, by producing beef with fewer acres, machinery, cows, etc. Let’s look at how properly managed pastures fit into this equation.

Rotational grazing is a harvest management tool. Anyone growing a crop of corn or soybeans or tomatoes or hay, which are all considered “crops”, would pay attention to when and how they harvested them. Here are some benefits of managing pasture harvest with controlled (rotational) grazing, a crop mindset, vs. continuous grazing, a traditional mindset:

Stocking:	Continuous	Controlled
Ave. daily gain	1.57 lb	1.72 lb
Carrying capacity	1.26 hd	1.62 hd
Live weight / acre	287 lb	462 lb

Source: Controlled Grazing of Virginia’s Pastures, VCE Pub 418-012

Average daily gain and Live Weight per acre represent an increase in volume, and translates into a higher rate of return on assts. Capacity represents an increase in volume, or could mean maintaining production with less land. Either translates into a higher rate of return on assets. Land is the biggest asset, so wouldn’t it be a good thing to know what the production per acre of land is? Note that the only difference in inputs in this study was managing the harvest, by creating some paddocks and providing water. No additional fertilizer or other inputs were added. The



paddock cost was probably a single strand of electric fence and some plastic posts every 40 feet, and the water could have been portable, costs which are negligible when compared to every other cost in the production system.

Controlled grazing translates into more grazing and less reliance on feeding hay. Feed costs are 70 – 80% of growing or maintaining an animal. It is THE big expense. According to a study done at VA Tech, “The cost of feed per pound with Hay is 3 to 4 times that of pasture.” (VCE Pub 418-012). Lowering the feed costs needed to produce a pound of beef translated into a higher rate of return on assets. But wait, there’s more: Hay requires about 9 man-hours per ton, a lot of “steel” (mower, bailer, rake, 80+hp), a lot of “gas” (diesel), removes a lot of fertilizer from the field, which needs to be replaced and which in these times, is a lot of \$\$\$, and hay storage losses can be 40%. Pasture, on the other hand, lets the animals do the work of harvesting the crop, requires some man-hours in moving animals and maybe moving water, may require an occasional mowing, some inter-seeding, and dragging to spread manure (bush hog, 40hp), and most of the fertilizer remains on the field. Less machinery needed translates into lower assets and a therefore a higher rate of return on assets. Less time needed feeding animals who can now feed themselves translates



into more time to do other things, or to “get a life”. Like one of my friends says, “It takes about as much time to string a wire in a pasture as it does to get the hay equipment out of the barn and get it ready to go to the field.” He, needless to say, “has a life”. He’s also the same philosopher who told me that “the first crop that should be planted on a farm is fence posts”.

AAEC Welcomes a New  
Department Head

By: Gordon Groover

Dr. Steven C. Blank will begin his new position as Head of the Agricultural and Applied Economics on April 1, 2012. Steve Blank is currently a professor in the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics at the University of California-Davis. He has done outstanding work in extension, research, and teaching at both the undergraduate and graduate levels with numerous awards for scholarship and extension programs. His work focuses on financial management, risk and decision-making, risk management tools, and management methods. Dr Blank also has administrative experience while at UC Davis where he served for six years as Assistant Vice-Provost for Academic Personnel. Welcome!



Gordon Groover ([groover@vt.edu](mailto:groover@vt.edu)), Extension Economist, Farm Management, Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics, Virginia Tech



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Winter Crops Conference

The third annual series of silage conferences hosted by VFGC was once again a success. This year’s program focused on production of quality small grains and ryegrass for silage. Tom Kilcer was the keynote speaker. Kilcer is a retired Cornell Extension Educator with over 30 years experience; he currently operates Advanced Agriculture Systems consulting and research firm. Drs. Chris Teutsch and Tom Thompson also covered management of ryegrass and fertility respectively. Over 120 producers seized the opportunity to attend sessions in Wytheville, Rocky Mount, or Dayton. Kilcer discussed different cropping rotations to maximize silage production using small grain silages. This included discussion of triticale as a silage crop. Kilcer showed data documenting the potential for triticale to produce the highest quality forage if harvested at flag leaf stage. Data was also presented on the use of BMR-6 Sorghum-Sudan as part of the rotation with small grains, particularly in drought prone areas. Kilcer’s final presentation of the day introduced the concept of “haylage in a day” that has gained



popularity in other areas of the nation. The concept is to only cut what can be chopped in a day. Adequate drying is achieved by mowing as wide a swath as possible (at least 85% of cutter bar width), increasing surface area for drying. The end result is reduced dry matter losses from faster dry down. This preserves the quality of the silage produced, allowing higher feeding rates in lactating dairy animals. Thank you to all the sponsors who helped make this event a success: DeKalb, Pioneer, Southern States, Anderson Tractor, New Holland, Mycogen, Hubner Seed, TA Seeds, Whitesel Brothers, Culpeper Farmers Coop, Helena Chemical, King’s Agriseeds, Augusta Coop, Farm Plus Insurance, and Wax Seed Company.

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I'm a contrarian by Nature! Life on Earth has evolved via trial and error through the eons yet the standard human intellect today defies the basic laws of common sense; at least that's how I see it. It seems to be getting worse. This is linked to Einstein's Theory of Relativity. As I grow older my view becomes more cynical of a World that moves through time and space. Below are a few examples.

We are NOT in the new age of "information technology". I've thought for quite some time that we peaked 10 years ago in the 'usefulness' of all these gadgets and gismos. In fact, all of this information is now counterproductive. Yea, basic email I get. Now Microsoft Word comes in handy as well. Cell phones are handy to make a phone call but we don't need texting simply because somebody is too lazy and introverted to pick up the phone and actually talk to a fellow human being. I don't need 550 TV channels at \$90.00 per month, especially when half of them are trying to sell me something through the Shopping Network. I do enjoy RFD-TV and an occasional cattle auction or Jeff Ishee on Virginia Farming. Perhaps rabbit ears were a lot better; definitely a lot cheaper. There are computer program upgrades galore and it seems that everyone has the "best and newest" every 5 minutes. My game plan, if I buy at all, is let the newer technology be on the market for two years or more and I can buy the same technology for 25

cents on the dollar and get along just fine. As long as the Sun comes up in the morning the new IT probably wasn't necessary anyway.

Investing? I'm selling cows and buying Real Estate. My cattle herd is not being liquidated. It is just not being expanded. We will be getting rid of the old culls that I thought I could afford to keep when prices were lower. Yea, I'll keep some heifers to maintain the herd. You can't go broke making a profit. Not worried about the economy but probably should be. Still can't figure out how borrowing more money will get us out of the mess that borrowing got us into in the first place. Canada seems smarter than the United States since they never borrowed much money and it appears they don't intend to. Canada also thinks it is more productive to utilize natural resources to build wealth versus building more gadgets to "surf the web".

Global warming? I'll take it! Not worried a bit. Best Virginia winter in years for cattle.

Government programs? Better be careful here. I like the programs that help us voluntarily, with a capital V, fence cattle out of creeks and save the Bay and rivers! They also help us convert cropland to hay and pasture land to reduce soil erosion, etc. I just can't figure out that part where the Government subsidizes the price of corn to produce ethanol so producers are encouraged to come along with 2 quarts of generic glyphosphate and kill down a perfectly good sod and plant the ground back to corn. This sounds contradictory to the first program. At least a lot of the corn is being planted no-till. What would the price of cattle be if corn was still 3 bucks? 5 weights might be bringing 3 dollars or better.

A recreational Ranch is an oxymoron. Recreational ranches have a limited warranty. The warranty guarantees that most people will discover that a ranch or farm is more work than recreation within two years of purchasing the property or when the money runs out, whichever comes first.

You are not using a "Smartphone" if you can surf the web while you are behind the steering wheel and driving down the road at 60 miles per hour to the recreational Ranch. If you are a man don't buy a GPS unit to figure out how to get to your recreational Ranch. Most GPS units I've seen have a woman's voice that tells you when you make a wrong turn. Most husbands don't listen to their wives when it comes to directions. Therefore the GPS system won't work.

Own a grain combine and no beef cows? Sell combine and buy beef cows. The only thing that comes out of the back of the combine is what went in the front. Grass goes in the front of cows. Baby calves come out the back.

Not a member of the Virginia Forage and Grassland Council? Join. Attend a meeting. Approximately 450 folks attended our Winter Conferences. We will have some great summer tours and fencing schools coming up. I hope to see you at one of the events.

Best Regards,  
Robert Shoemaker  
President, VFGC

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## Beef Prices in 2012

By: Carl C. Stafford

Allen Greenspan famously attributed high stock prices in 1996 to "irrational exuberance." That is not the case for current high beef prices. Market fundamentals are driving the increases.

There is a shortage of cows which produce feeder calves and produce the high quality beef we enjoy. In addition to fewer finished steers coming to market, the cow shortage means there are fewer of them to slaughter for hamburger and other lower quality cuts. To be sure we are harvesting more pounds of beef per finished beef animal today than ever before, so it takes fewer to produce the same amount of beef. However, this does not compensate for the cow shortage.

Exports are another fundamental fact driving the beef industry. We sell other countries all types of beef products. Some think steak is the only exported beef product – not true but it is in great demand. Would you believe beef tongue has significant appeal to some and they will pay good money for it? My grandfather fixed it cold with mustard, served on a sandwich – good eating. The point is beef is selling around the world and United States beef is at the top of the shopping list of those who can afford it.

These two points help explain the historically high beef prices, both on the hoof and in the supermarket. However, Randy Blach of Cattle Fax suggests there is a correction in our beef price future. Will you be prepared?

Timing the market is nearly impossible, so stick to your usual marketing plan; raise calves as you always have, putting on gains and selling them at your "market ready" weight when you usually do. As the work by Kevin Dhuyvetter at Kansas State suggested, what you do with your income has more to do with your profitability than the amount of income you make.

Carl C. Stafford ([ccstaffo@vt.edu](mailto:ccstaffo@vt.edu)), Extension Agent, Agriculture and Natural Resources, Animal Science, Northern District.

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## Harlan E. White Scholarship

### Applications

The Harlan E. White Scholarship, established by the Virginia Forage and Grassland Council, for undergraduate students studying the promotion and better understanding of forages and grasslands in Virginia is now available for the first time. Applications are available on the Virginia Tech College of Agriculture and Life Sciences website, <http://www.cses.vt.edu/current-students/Scholarships/undergrad-scholarships-cses.html>. Application forms open November 15 and close March 1 unless otherwise noted. Scholarships are awarded per academic year to students enrolled full-time (12 credit hours or more per semester) in the Department of Crop and Soil Environmental Sciences or in the Agricultural Technology Program. Please see the above website for details and additional requirements.

The Virginia Forage and Grassland Council continues to seek your assistance in honoring the life of Dr. Harlan E. White. The Dr. Harlan E. White Memorial Scholarship Fund has been established by the Virginia Forage and Grassland Council and will be used for scholarships, like the one now available; however the fund needs to grow to offer more and larger scholarships.

Dr. White dedicated his life to Virginia's forage industry. It is now time for us, the recipients of these good works, to dedicate ourselves and share some of the great gifts that Harlan bestowed upon us.

The Virginia Forage and Grassland Council is accepting funds from corporate and individual donors that wish to honor Dr. White. The goal is to establish a permanent endowment to provide scholarships to support Virginia forage education and research. VFGC has an ambitious plan to raise \$50,000 by 2013, and \$500,000 by 2015. The fund will be managed and administered by the Virginia Forage and Grassland Council Board of Directors. All funds will be audited on an annual basis and shall be dedicated to the sole purpose of the Scholarship Fund.

We are asking for your financial support in this endeavor and welcome all donations in any amount. The following categories will be recognized. Platinum Medallion, \$10,000 or more; Gold Medallion, \$1,000 – 10,000; Silver Medallion, \$500 – \$1,000; Bronze Medallion, \$100 – \$500; and Friends of the Fund, under \$100.

Your contributions qualify as a charitable contribution because VFGC administers the Fund and is a 501 (c)(3) organization. Additional information and donation forms are available at the VFGC website, <http://vaforages.org/scholarship/>, and at VFGC meetings and conferences.

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# VIRGINIA FORAGER

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## Jerry Swisher receives the VFGC Harlan White Distinguished Service Award

By: David Fiske and Chris Teutsch

Jerry M. Swisher, Jr. of Fairfield, Virginia was awarded the VFGC Harlan White Distinguished Service Award during the 2012 VFGC Winter Forage Conferences. This prestigious award, named after the late Extension Forage Specialist, Harlan White, is awarded to individuals that have demonstrated outstanding leadership and devoted service to the forage and livestock industries of Virginia.



Jerry attended Ferrum College where he graduated with an Associate's Degree and played on the 1968 National Junior College Athletic Association football team coached by the legendary head coach W.H. "Hank" Norton. Jerry then attended Virginia Tech where he received his Bachelor and Master's degrees in Dairy Science.

Many Virginia agricultural producers know Jerry through his work as a Dairy Extension Agent with Virginia Cooperative Extension. During his 30+ year career with Virginia Cooperative Extension, Jerry was responsible for the development of the rotational dairy loafing lot system and assisted many dairy producers with the planning and implementation of forage-based grazing dairies in Virginia and the mid-Atlantic region.

Jerry also served two terms as the president of the Virginia Forage and Grassland Council. In this capacity he implemented innovative and cutting edge educational programming that

positively impacted forage and livestock producers across the Commonwealth. This "out of the box" educational programming and his work with organic livestock producers and grazing dairymen has at times gone against conventional thinking, but Jerry has never shied away from challenge of meeting the educational needs of all segments of Virginia's forage and livestock industry.

Now retired, Jerry and his wife Donna continue to live in Fairfield where Jerry operates a cow-calf beef operation. Through his consulting work, Jerry continues to assist dairy and beef producers throughout Virginia with troubleshooting, facility designs, and the design and implementation of grazing systems.

Please join the Virginia Forage and Grassland Council in congratulating Jerry as the recipient of the Harlan White Distinguished Service Award.

## Equine Conference to feature Scott Purdum of Advantage Horsemanship

The Virginia Forage and Grassland Council and Virginia Cooperative Extension will hold the 2012 Southern Piedmont Equine Extravaganza: Putting Science into Practice. The conference will be held at Virginia Tech's Southern Piedmont Agricultural Research and Extension Center located outside of Blackstone, VA on April 7, 2012. Registration will begin at 8 am with the actual conference beginning at 8:30 am. Lunch will be provided by the Buffalo Creek Pony Club and is included in the registration fee. The conference will conclude at 3 pm.

Scott Purdum of Advantage Horsemanship will be this year's keynote speaker. As a trainer, Scott uses his horsemanship skills to teach all types of horses. His training creates willingness in the horse to work with and respect the handler. With each client he teaches both the horse and handler how to work together to form a better relationship with each other. Advantage Horsemanship, his weekly TV program can be seen on the RuralTV Channel on the Dish Network (232). In addition to his TV program, he conducts clinics, speaks at conferences, and offers personalized training. Scott will discuss building a stronger bond with your horse in the morning and demonstrate



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Reporting the progress of Virginia's forage industry