

Vol. 5. MAY 2025

The Stalk



Accomack & Northampton County Cooperative Extension
Eastern Shore Agricultural Research & Extension Center

May 2025 On-Farm Food Safety Update

Theresa Pittman, Accomack County Ag & Natural Resources Extension Agent

As we move into May 2025, it's crucial for our local farmers to stay informed about significant updates to the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). These changes focus on three critical areas that will impact farm operations.

First, let's talk about the Produce Safety Rule. Farms using pre-harvest agricultural water for produce must conduct annual water assessments. The compliance dates vary based on farm size: large farms need to comply by April 7, 2025, small farms by April 6, 2026, and very small farms by April 5, 2027. To clarify, large farms are those with annual produce sales over \$500,000, small farms have sales between \$250,000 and \$500,000, and very small farms have sales less than \$250,000.

Next, we have the Pre-Harvest Agricultural Water Requirements. Farms must follow systems-based assessments to identify and manage hazards, with compliance dates mirroring the farm size categories mentioned above.

To prepare for these changes, farmers should conduct regular assessments, ensuring annual water evaluations and additional checks whenever significant changes occur. It's also important to enhance recordkeeping practices to comply with the Food Traceability Final Rule. Staying informed about state-specific regulations and compliance deadlines will be crucial.

If you have questions or need some support, contact your local Extension Office. An agent will be able to help provide valuable guidance to ensure compliance.

By focusing on these areas, farmers can stay prepared and compliant with the latest food safety regulations. Let's work together to ensure a safe and productive farming season!

From farm to fork



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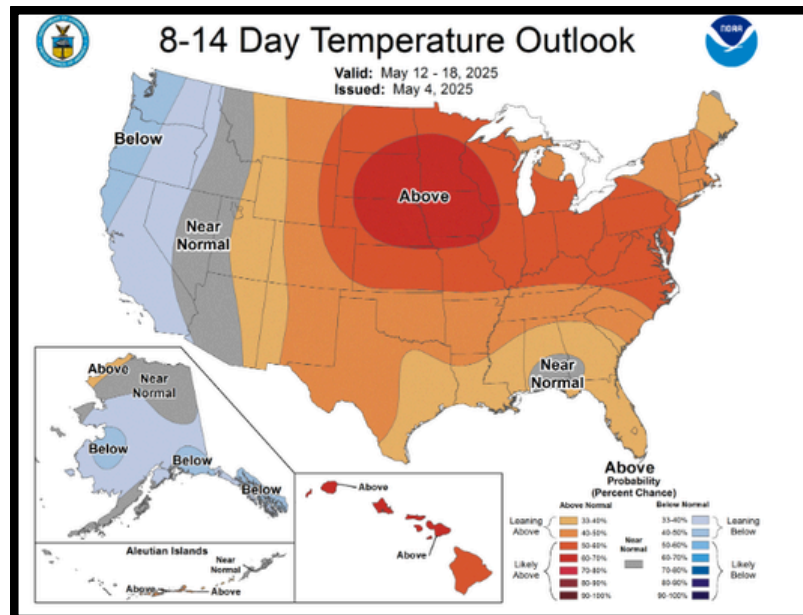
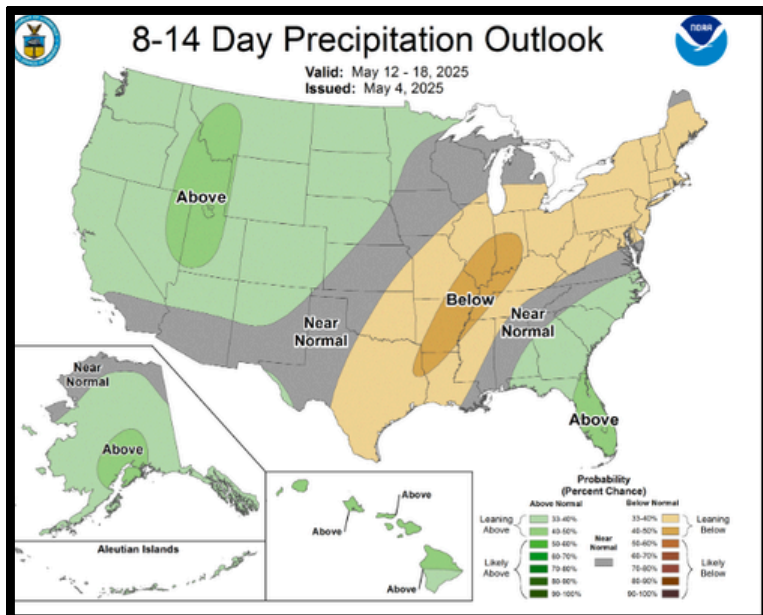
THE AGENT'S CORNER

Theresa Pittman - Accomack County ANR Agent

Hélène Doughty - Northampton County ANR Agent

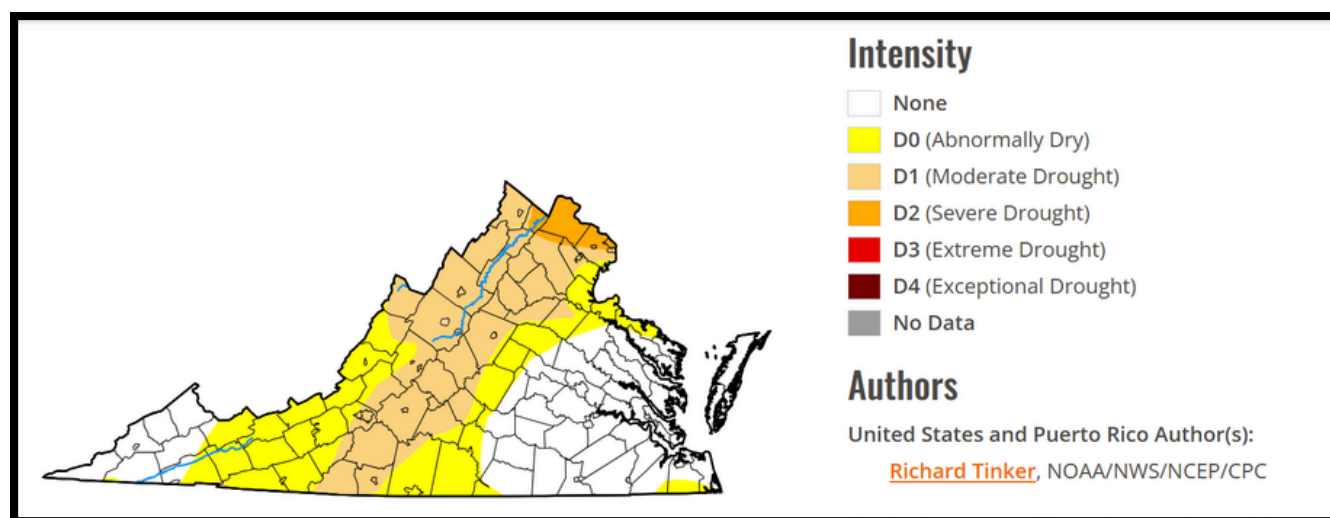


TEMPERATURE AND PRECIPITATION OUTLOOK



SOURCE: <https://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/>

DROUGHT MONITOR



SOURCE: <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/>

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If you are a person with a disability and desire any assistive devices, services or other accommodations to participate in any activity, please contact Rachel Barnes at 757-787-1361* (*TDD number is (800) 828-1120) during business hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. to discuss accommodations.



APRIL 2025 VCE PROGRAMS RECAP

2025 FOOD SAFETY SCHOOL

The 2025 Eastern Shore Food Safety School, hosted by Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE), was held on April 3rd at the Eastern Shore Agricultural Research and Extension Center in Painter, VA

This program provided attendees with a comprehensive understanding of Virginia's food safety regulations and compliance requirements for food businesses. Participants learned essential steps to create a robust food safety system, including best practices for maintaining high safety standards. The workshop covered strategies for growing food businesses while ensuring safety and tips for scaling operations without compromising standards. Attendees left equipped with the knowledge to implement effective food safety measures in their operations, contributing to a safer food supply chain on the Eastern Shore.

Many Thanks to Dr. Alexis Hamilton, Course Instructor



2025 COMMERCIAL PESTICIDE LICENSE RECERTIFICATION COURSE

Accomack and Northampton Virginia Cooperative Extension commercial pesticide license recertification course took place on April 17th and included interactive weed identification among the many topics presented at the Eastern Shore AREC. Commercial pesticide license holders have to get recertified every 2 years through a one day course providing them with regulatory and safety updates as well as up-to-date education on integrated pest management of insects, diseases and weeds relevant to their license category (agricultural plant pest control, ornamental pest control, turf and right of way).



Agents' Calendar: MAY 2025

"Working for the Wellbeing of Our Communities!"

- May 2: Career Day Occohannock Elementary School
- May 5: VCE/ESAREC monthly meeting, Cab Cast Recording, Reality Store Broadwater Academy
- May 6: MG Executive Board Meeting
- May 8: Backyard Poultry Zoom Series - [Join HERE](#)
- May 9: VCE Grain Teams Meeting, "Plant Eastern Shore Natives" Steering Committee Meeting
- May 13: New Roots Youth Garden Insect Presentation
- May 15: Hydroponics webinar: beginner's guide for agents
- May 21: ESSWCD board meeting
- May 22-23: Eastern Shore Sheep Shearing
- May 28: Farm Visit Safety Webinar/New Agent Training

Ongoing:

- Small Farm/Food Business education series
- Farm Transition Workshop (Fall)
- Ag Fair Crop Competitions

Weekly:

- WESR VCE AG Radio recordings - daily @8:30am/12:30pm
- WESR Master Gardener Radio recordings - daily @12:20 pm
- Slug Trap check in cover crop study (Soybean Board Project) and slug bait study
- CabCast Recordings

THE AGENT'S CORNER

Theresa Pittman - Accomack County ANR Agent

Hélène Doughty - Northampton County ANR Agent



PRIZE GIANT PUMPKIN COMPETITION

AT THE EASTERN SHORE AGRICULTURAL FAIR



HERE IS HOW YOU CAN PARTICIPATE:

- 1 Learn how to grow a giant prize pumpkin at:
<https://youtu.be/-9RyXk-bLHI>
- 2 Pick up your free seed at the Accomack or Northampton Cooperative Extension Office
- 3 Register online
- 4 Plant your seeds and watch your prize pumpkin grow!



COMPETE & LEARN

WITH



LEARN ON OUR YOUTUBE CHANNEL & TRY YOUR HAND AT GROWING A GIANT PUMPKIN

Register at:

<https://forms.gle/zZx8ieWv8JnptYoq6>

2025 Administrative Professionals Day



Amanda Hurley,
Northampton VCE



Rachel Barnes,
Accomack VCE



Belinda Sterling,
ESAREC

On April 23rd, we celebrated National Administrative Professionals' Day by honoring the invaluable contributions of the Administrative and Fiscal Assistant in our Accomack and Northampton Virginia Cooperative Extension units and at the Eastern Shore AREC. Their dedication and organizational skills play a vital role in supporting the success of the many programs we provide. We are truly fortunate to have such committed and talented members on our teams.

Thank you

AGENT QUESTION OF THE MONTH

"What are poisonous and toxic plants to horses?"

Many plants, trees and shrubs are toxic or poisonous to horses such as red maple, chokeberry, horse chestnut, black locust, oaks, black walnut, Prunus species (cherries, pears, peaches), KY coffee tree, Chinaberry tree, Crab apple tree, cherry laurel, golden chain tree, Tung nut tree, Mesquite, American Persimmon, buttercups, jimsonweed, horse nettle, pokeweed, poison hemlock, alsike clover, rhododendron, boxwood, holly, and Japanese yew. Many weeds, ornamentals and endophyte-infected tall fescue are also toxic to horses. For a comprehensive list, please contact your local extension agent.





Strengthening Global Agricultural Partnerships: CALS Global and Tony Blair Institute Visit Eastern Shore AREC

Dr. Mark Reiter, Soil and Nutrient Management Extension Specialist

A recent visit by Virginia Tech's College of Agricultural and Life Sciences' (CALS) Global and the Tony Blair Institute to the Eastern Shore Agricultural Research and Extension Center (AREC) marked a significant step in exploring how Virginia Tech's agricultural research model could be adapted internationally. The delegation toured the AREC's facilities, including its 220-acre farm and an overview of its advanced research programs, gaining firsthand insight into its commitment to supporting commercial vegetable and agronomic crop production.

Discussions centered on the Eastern Shore AREC's integrated pest management, plant pathology research and diagnostics, soil health initiatives, and sensor based agricultural practices, which align with CALS Global's mission to build global partnerships. The Tony Blair Institute, focused on policy-driven agricultural solutions, examined how AREC's research informs sustainable farming strategies. This exchange fosters collaboration, potentially shaping international agricultural frameworks that enhance productivity and resilience. By leveraging the Eastern Shore AREC's expertise, both organizations aim to develop scalable models that address global food security challenges while strengthening local farming communities.





Considerations for preemergence herbicide applications in corn and soybean

Dr. Vijay Singh, Weed Science Extension Specialist

Growers in the eastern shore of Virginia have started planting corn, and consider planting soybean in next 2-3 weeks. Here are a few tips for enhancing weed control at early stage.

Cover crops which are terminated with glyphosate (Roundup)-based chemical strategy may take longer (10-12 days) for effective termination compared with paraquat based termination (4-6 days). Irrespective of termination methodology, it is recommended to use preemergence (residual) herbicide on the top of cover crop residues, especially if cover crop biomass is not even throughout the field.

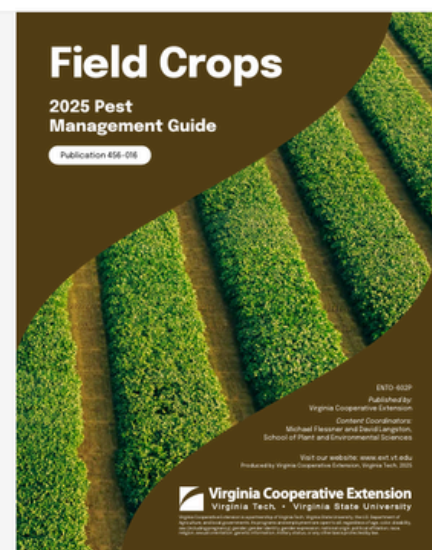
If there is not enough residue in the field or in case of the tilled field (without cover crop), use tank-mixture or premix of at least two herbicides instead of relying on one herbicide. Based on crop history, if sedges are a problem, use group 15 herbicides (example, Dual Magnum) in the mixture. Adding atrazine (group 5) to tank-mixes for preemergence application in corn, generally results in greater weed control. Use 10-15 gallons of carrier volume for adequate spray coverage if not specified in the herbicide label.

Table. Examples of effective preemergence herbicides/premixes labelled for corn and soybean

Crop	Preemergence herbicides (groups)
Corn	Atrazine (5), Dual Magnum (15), Bicep II Magnum (5+15), Acuron (5+15+27), Harness extra (5 +15), Lexar (5+15+27), Storen (15+27)
Soybean	Dual Magnum (15), Metribuzin (5), Reflex (14), Anthem Maxx (14+15), Authority Elite/ BroadAxe (14+15), Tendovo (2+5+15), Zidua (15), Zidua PRO (2+14+15)



Refer to the
Virginia Tech's
pest management
guide for more
information:
https://www.pubs_ext.vt.edu/content/dam/pubs_ext_vt.edu/456/456-016/ENTO-602.pdf





Dr. Higgins checking weather stations in potato fields

Update from the Plant Pathology Lab

Dr. Doug Higgins, Assistant Professor of Plant Pathology & Extension Specialist

The lab has been busy establishing early spring trials and preparing for summer projects. Weather stations were installed in four potato fields on the Eastern Shore to gather inputs needed to forecast conditions conducive to late blight and early blight. Please email me if you would like to be added to the forecast listserv.

As I write this, winter wheat heads are beginning to emerge in the scab trials we have established for the Virginia Small Grains Board and the U.S. Wheat and Barley Scab Initiative—both here on the Shore and across the bay in the Northern Neck.

Two master's students, Ms. Pooja Panwar and Ms. Marian Grskovich, have begun field trials evaluating fungicide seed treatments on sweet corn and control measures for chocolate spot in winter-grown faba beans. Calyn and I have also been busy traveling across the bay to set trials for improved disease management in spring-grown broccoli.

In the diagnostic lab, samples are starting to trickle in wheat fields and homeowners. The lab is working on integrating new molecular diagnostic assays for improved detection of potato/tomato late blight and soft rot in potatoes. In short, we are off and running, and we look forward to providing more research updates as the season progresses.



Update from the Entomology Lab

Dr. Kemper Sutton, Assistant Professor Entomology, ESAREC

Potato Update:

The warmer weather over the past few weeks has got Colorado Potato Beetles out of their winter sleep and on the move. I started seeing potato beetles in my trials at the experiment station starting April 20th and have also seen them in commercial fields as well. Five days later on the 25th we began seeing egg masses and I expect to see these beginning to hatch next week. With the continued warmer weather going into late April and early May it will be important to scout your potatoes weekly to avoid going over threshold.

Slugs Update:

Slugs have continued to be abundant in our traps at the experiment station. On April 24th we caught 213 slugs in 64 traps. As corn begins to emerge, keep an eye out for slug damage especially around field edges.



2025 SOUTHEASTERN US VEGETABLE CROP HANDBOOK

This handbook represents a joint effort among Extension specialists and researchers from 15 land-grant universities in the U.S. who work in the area of vegetable production. These specialists and researchers represent a wide array of disciplines: agricultural engineering, agribusiness, entomology, food safety, horticulture (vegetable production), plant pathology, postharvest physiology, soil science, and weed science.

This handbook comprises up-to-the-minute information developed from research and Extension projects conducted throughout the southeastern United States. The key idea behind this handbook is to provide you with a practical resource that conveniently fits on your dashboard. It contains the information that you need to manage your vegetable crops, including which varieties to plant, planting dates, fertilizer recommendations, cover crop selection and conservation tillage options, pesticide selection, grafting, fertigation, plasticulture, postharvest handling, alternative pest management tools and suggestions, as well as many other topics. The handbook is available at: https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/content/dam/pubs_ext_vt_edu/AREC/AREC-66/SPES-674.pdf



Welcome Brian

Brian Silveous has been hired as the new Mechanic at the Eastern Shore AREC. With over a decade of hands-on experience in the automotive industry, he brings a deep understanding of mechanical systems. Before this Brian built his foundation working in a car dealership. Outside the AREC he's an outdoorsmen who enjoys hunting, finishing, and spending time in nature.

ANNOUNCEMENTS



VIRGINIA AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION
EASTERN SHORE AGRICULTURAL
RESEARCH AND EXTENSION CENTER
VIRGINIA TECH.

4-H SUMMER CAMP

July 21 - July 25, 2025

4-H camp is a week-long residential camp held at Airfield 4-H Educational Center in Wakefield, VA with Suffolk, Greensville-Emporia, Accomack and Northampton. Open to youth ages 9 - 13.

Scholarships
are available
for Eastern
Shore youth



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NOW
HIRING

Extension Specialist and Assistant Professor of Horticultural Cropping Systems (Job # 532664): Specific responsibilities will be to develop an innovative, nationally recognized research and extension program focused on commercial horticulture for vegetables and other potential crops for the Eastern Shore, Northern Neck, Southeast Virginia, and other parts of the Commonwealth where vegetable production is important. Large acreage vegetable crops include snap bean, potato, tomato, pumpkin, broccoli, among others. Programs should advance understanding of varieties, fumigation, irrigation, high tunnels, equipment, and introduce new crops to our state. Requirements include a Ph.D. in Horticulture, Crop Science, Agronomy or closely related field. Apply online: <https://careers.pageuppeople.com/968/cw/en-us/job/532664/assistant-professor-of-horticultural-cropping-systems>

SAVE THE DATE

2025 EASTERN SHORE SHEEP SHEARING PROGRAM

Arrangements have been made for Emily Chamelin of Chamelin Shearing to shear sheep on Thursday, May 22nd in Accomack and Northampton counties. The fee is \$75 per farm visit plus \$5 for ewes and \$10 for rams.



**Thursday
May 22nd, 2025**

To schedule a visit to your farm, please contact the Accomack County Extension Office - 757-787-1361 or tpittman@vt.edu



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If you are a person with a disability and desire assistance or accommodation, please notify Rachel Barnes, Accomack County at 757-787-1361 during business hours of 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

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VIRGINIA AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION
**EASTERN SHORE AGRICULTURAL
 RESEARCH AND EXTENSION CENTER**
 VIRGINIA TECH.

Virginia Cooperative Extension brings the resources of Virginia's land-grant universities, Virginia Tech and Virginia State University, to the people of the commonwealth. VCE provides education through programs in Agriculture and Natural Resources, Family and Consumer Sciences, 4-H Youth Development and Community Viability.

The Virginia Tech, Eastern Shore AREC is committed to supporting commercial vegetable, grain, oilseed, and fiber production throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. Centrally located on Virginia's Eastern Shore, the center conducts basic and applied research on more than 25 agricultural crops.