



VIRGINIA AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION
**SHENANDOAH VALLEY AGRICULTURAL
RESEARCH AND EXTENSION CENTER**
VIRGINIA TECH™

McCormick Farm News

*Volume 1, Issue 1
January 2022*



Message from the Superintendent

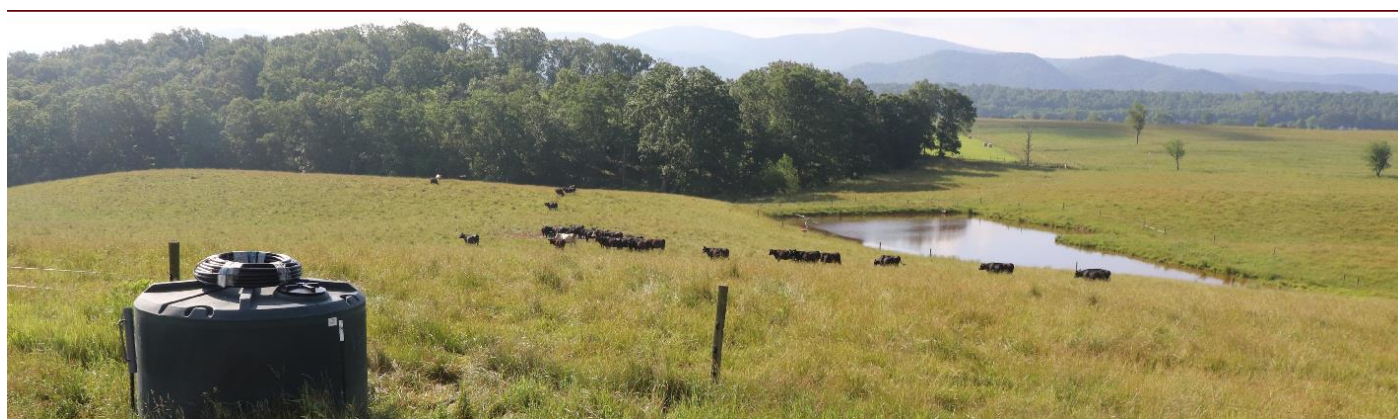
Thanks for reading the first newsletter of the Shenandoah Valley Agricultural Research and Extension Center (SVAREC).

As superintendent of SVAREC – also known as the McCormick Farm – I’m looking forward to introducing you to the work we’re doing here as we continue our legacy of agricultural innovation.

Our mission is three-fold – improve the viability of the livestock, forage, and forestry production systems in our region, serve as a link between agricultural and forestry production systems and students, and raise awareness of the significance of McCormick Farm history.

We are planning to send out a newsletter twice a year to provide an update on the research and demonstrations taking place at the McCormick Farm. Through this publication, we will provide landowners, farmers, agricultural professionals, and students with information on helpful land management practices.

If you have suggestions for content or programs that you would like to see, please feel free to email or call me (gpent@vt.edu; 540-377-2255). To learn more about the Shenandoah Valley AREC, visit our [website](#) or watch this short introductory [video](#).



Recent grants and awards

Our researchers are exploring the benefits of more grazing days, optimizing calf nutrition with winter forages, and creating easier paths to large solar energy installations for Virginia farmers.

- ♦ Virginia Cattle Industry Board. Creep-grazing brassica and small grain forages for fall-born calves. Pent, G. J., Swecker, W. S., & Tracy, B. F. 2021-2022. \$7,606.
- ♦ Virginia Agricultural Experiment Station. Graze 300 VA. Stafford, C., Ritchie, L., Clark, B., Layton-Dudding, J., Pent, G., Fike, J., Benner, J., Swanson, C., Baker, S., Mize, T., Temu, V., Payne, K., & Fimon, L. 2021-2022. \$27,030.
- ♦ Virginia Agricultural Experiment Station. A better solar “panel” from Virginia Tech: Now with more Ut Prosim! Ignosh, J., Bovay, J., Daniels, W. L., Fike, J., Lane, R., Meyers, R., Munsell, J., Paulette, M., Pent, G., Prysby, M., Sample, D., Shorridge, J., & Welbaum, G. 2021-2022. \$60,000.

Recent publications

Our livestock specialists are developing breeding practices that improve pregnancy rates for beef heifers and pasture management methods that can optimize lamb growth.

- Mercadante, V. R. R. G., Lamb, G. C. C., Oosthuizen, N., Wege Dias, N. W., Pancini, S., Haines, H., ... & Fontes, P. L. (2021). 233 Estrus response and pregnancy rates of beef replacement heifers enrolled in two fixed-time artificial insemination protocols, with or without pre-synchronization. *Journal of Animal Science*, 99(Supplement_3), 125-126.
- Wildeus, S., O'Brien, D., Pent, G. J., & Payne, K. M. (2021). Growth performance of short scrotum and castrated hair sheep lambs on pasture during different seasons. In *Journal of Animal Science*, 99, 40-30.

In the areas of forage and forestry, our scientists develop practices that improve ecosystem health and functioning. They consider minimizing input costs, improving productivity, and addressing potential constraints with the adoption of silvopasture and native grass plantings.

- Lehmkuhler, J. (Host). (2021, August 19). Introduction to silvopastoral systems (No. 19) [Audio podcast episode]. In *Beef Bits Podcast*. Podbean. <https://beefbits.podbean.com/e/introduction-to-silvopastoral-systems/>
- Munsell, J. F., Fike, J. H., Pent, G. J., Frey, G. E., Addlestone, B. J., & Downing, A. K. (2021). Thinning forests or planting fields? Producer preferences for establishing silvopasture. *Agroforestry Systems*, 1-12.
- Munsell, J. F., Fike, J. H., Pent, G. J., & Frey, G. E. (2021). Is livestock producers' interest in silvopasture related to their operational perspectives or characteristics? *Agroforestry Systems*, 1-11.
- Pent, G. J., & Daniel, J. B. (2021). Converting pastures to native warm season grasses: Summer forage and wildlife habitat in Caroline County. Virginia Cooperative Extension, SPES-308NP.
- Pent, G. J., & Fike, J. H. (2021). Enhanced ecosystem services provided by silvopastures. In *Agroforestry and Ecosystem Services* (pp. 141-171). Springer, Cham.

Upcoming events

- Virginia Forage and Grassland Council Winter Conferences (www.vaforages.org/events)
 - o January 18, 2022: Wytheville
 - o January 19, 2022: Chatham
 - o January 20, 2022: Culpeper
 - o January 21, 2022: Weyers Cave or livestream
- Solar-Powered Water Pumping Systems for Livestock (Contact: jignosh@vt.edu)
 - o April 7-8, 2022: Shenandoah Valley AREC

Agent's Column



Matt Booher, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Rockingham

As an agricultural research center focused on grassland agriculture, Virginia Tech's Shenandoah Valley AREC/McCormick Farm connects Virginia's producers and agricultural stakeholders with research and information to address the unique challenges of the forage and livestock industry.

Faculty from Virginia Tech's McCormick Farm have long been involved in the Virginia Forage and Grassland Council (VFGC) and its shared mission of forage-based education. Accordingly, I would like direct you as a McCormick Farm stakeholder to VFGC's upcoming 2022 Winter Forage Conference series. This year's conference, *The Green Side of Beef: Defending Grassland Agriculture*, will explore the challenges faced by the livestock industry as it seeks to be—and be understood as—part of the solution to our global environmental problems.

The keynote speaker will be Nicolette Hahn Niman, a former vegetarian turned rancher. Once an environmental attorney who fought against the livestock industry, Nicolette now writes and travels widely, making the case that beef can be sustainable. An updated edition of her book, *Defending Beef*, has just been released.

Also speaking will be Dr. Alan Franzluebbers, a USDA Professor of Soil Ecology with NC State University. Alan will present surprising new research with implications for managing nutrients on pasture, as well as discussing the role of healthy grasslands in sequestering carbon.

The conference series will be held in four locations:

- o January 18, 2022: Wytheville
- o January 19, 2022: Chatham
- o January 20, 2022: Culpeper
- o January 21, 2022: Weyers Cave or livestream

For more information or to register, visit www.vaforages.com.



o

Specialist's Column



Scott Greiner, Virginia Tech, Animal and Poultry Sciences

The 46th Annual Virginia Performance Tested Ram Sale sponsored by the Virginia Sheep Producers Association was held Saturday, August 26, 2021 at the Virginia Sheep Evaluation Station at the Shenandoah Valley AREC.

Rams were developed at the station on a 63-day test to evaluate performance, with the top end offered in the annual sale. A Sheep Field Day educational program was held in conjunction with the sale and covered timely topics for sheep producers.

The 53 rams offered sold for a record average price of \$799 per head. The replacement ewe lamb sale held in conjunction with the ram sale sold 26 open ewe lambs for an average price of \$423 per head.

Breed averages were as follows: 5 Fall-born Dorset rams averaged \$910, 10 Winter Dorsets \$745, 2 Fall Suffolks \$875, 21 Winter Suffolks \$721, 1 Winter Crossbred \$850, 2 Winter North Country Cheviot \$675, 7 Fall White Dorpers \$964, 1 Winter White Dorper \$900, and 4 Winter Katahdins \$900.

