Hot Fun In The Summertime!

It’s that time of the year when excessive heat pays us a visit and it has started early with some very hot days in May. Mid to upper 90’s in May is a little too much too soon. Dog days are supposed to be in July and August. One thing is certain and that is our weather is unpredictable. In the last newsletter I made reference to severe weather being a threat in the spring. This spring has been devastating for people all over the nation. Tornadoes have brought mass destruction and death even in our state. Floods have also destroyed many acres and homesteads along the Mississippi. Hopefully we have the severe weather behind us as we look for ways to stay cool. Memorial Day is the unofficial start of summer and the beginning of folks looking for summertime fun. Many people migrate to the beaches to enjoy sand between their toes and the ocean waves. They usually go back to the air conditioning to beat the heat some time during the day. It is also a good time to enjoy some good hot weather food - cool and refreshing meals, fresh fruit and homemade ice cream. On a hot summer day at the beach or in the back yard, homemade ice cream is hard to beat. If the beach is not your idea of fun in the summer, you can head up to the mountains to catch some cooler weather. Those fresh breezes and cold mountain streams can be a delight this time of year. No matter how hot you are, when you get in a mountain stream it can take your breath away. This is one of nature’s air conditioners that keeps on working. Once again look for foods that are cool and refreshing to enjoy at picnics or at a mountain evening meal. There is so much to do in the summer in North Carolina. Take time to enjoy our state. If you want to stay local, enjoy the sites that the Piedmont has to offer. There will be many Fourth of July celebrations that you can be a part of. Usually these are extremely hot and most people are looking for a way to stay cool while enjoying the festivities. However you spend your time, remember that there are many opportunities to have hot fun in the summertime.

Roger N. Cobb, Director
Hydration Station
~Jessica Oswald, MS, RD, LDN
Family & Consumer Science Agent

Being hydrated is a vital aspect to a healthy lifestyle. It is important to stay hydrated all year long; however, in the summer, it’s slightly more important to pay attention to your hydration status.

Water, and other fluids, are absolutely necessary for your survival. Your body needs water in order to function properly. Your cells need water. Your organs need water. Your brain needs water.

As the temperatures outside rise, your body loses more water than usual. This means that it’s important to stay well-hydrated and to recognize the symptoms of dehydration in case you or someone else isn’t getting enough water.

Dehydration is serious business and it can be life threatening. Early signs of dehydration include thirst, flushed skin, premature fatigue, an increased body temperature, faster breathing, and an increased pulse rate. When early signs of dehydration are noticed it is important to replace lost fluids so that the dehydration does not progress.

Signs of advanced dehydration include dizziness, headaches, increased weakness, and fatigue. With advanced dehydration, medical attention may be needed if lost fluids cannot be replaced. Instead of waiting until the signs of dehydration show up, stay hydrated with these simple tips from the American Dietetic Association:

1. Carry a reusable water bottle. Once it’s empty make sure that you fill it back up.
2. Eat fruit or popsicles. Drinking water isn’t the only way that your body gets the fluids it needs; you can get fluids from the foods that you eat. Fruits like watermelon and cantaloupe have a high water content, as do frozen treats like 100% fruit juice pops.

Hydration Fact:
Did you know that half your body weight is made up of water?

Blackberry Limeade
(Makes 8 servings)

Ingredients
- 6 cups water, divided
- 3 cups fresh blackberries
- 1 cup sugar
- 2/3 cup fresh lime juice (about 4 limes)
- 8 thin lime slices
- Fresh blackberries (optional)

Directions
Put 1 cup of water and 3 cups of blackberries in blender, process until smooth. Press blackberry puree through a sieve into a large pitcher, discard seeds. Add remaining 5 cups water, sugar, and juice to pitcher. Stir until sugar dissolves. Place 1 lime slice and a few blackberries, if desired, into each of 8 glasses. Pour about 1 cup limeade into each glass.

Nutrition Facts (per serving): 125 calories, 0.3 grams of fat, 0.8 grams of protein, 31.9 grams of carbohydrate, and 0.7 grams of fiber.

So You Want to Can...

Do you want to learn to can salsa or green beans? Do you want to learn to can jams and jellies? Do you want to learn how to make pickles? Cooperative Extension has workshops just for you.

In July, classes on each of these topics will be offered. These classes will be interactive. You will get hands-on experience and you will get the opportunity to take a product that you canned home with you. There is a $10 fee for each class and registration is required. Call now! These classes will fill up fast.

Salsas – Wednesday, July 20th, 2011; 9am-1pm
Location: Alamance County Cooperative Extension Office
To register call (336) 570-6740

Green Beans – Friday, July 22nd, 2011; 1pm-4pm
Location: Alamance County Cooperative Extension Office
To register call (336) 570-6740

Pickling – Wednesday, July 27th, 2011; 1pm-4pm
Location: Orange County Cooperative Extension Office
To register call (919) 245-2050

Jams/Jellies – Friday, July 29th, 2011; 9am-1pm
Location: Orange County Cooperative Extension Office
To register call (919) 245-2050
Mark and the Beanstalk
~Mark Danieley, Horticulture Agent

Well, summer time is here and it is easy to tell who the real gardeners are. Hot weather and grass in the garden usually cull out the fair weather gardening folks. I enjoy most of the garden chores, but I’m not really excited about picking beans. I can’t bend over or squat for very long and sitting on a 5 gallon bucket isn’t great either. I have seen some of the rolling garden stools and may have to give one of those a try some day. In any case, it still takes a pretty long time to pick a bucket of beans. One thing I have discovered is that I like picking pole beans better than bush beans. While there are beans that are close to the ground, most can be picked in a standing position which suits me better.

If you are growing pole beans, you need to have some kind of trellis system to train them on. The first year, I made a string trellis. It required a lot of string and a considerable amount of time to construct. It worked fairly well, but I did not make it tall enough. The beans soon got to the top of the 6 foot trellis and began to grow back down. I then had 2 layers of bean vines to dig through to get at the beans. That certainly made bean picking less enjoyable. I determined pretty quickly that there must be a better way.

The second year, I used a roll of 8 foot wildlife netting. I had some bamboo poles that were tall enough to support the netting and the installation went very quickly. The beans quickly grew to the top of the trellis and started growing back down, but I pruned them frequently to avoid the overlapping vine problem. So far, so good, then it was time to harvest. No matter how hard I tried to get all the beans on one side of the netting, there were always a few that stayed hidden until I was on the other side. The problem with the wildlife netting then became apparent. The holes were too small to reach through, so I ended up tearing holes in the netting. Not a big problem since I had planned to use the netting for only one year, but an aggravation none the less. They say the third time is the charm and I certainly hope so. On a visit out to Clay Smith’s farm earlier this spring, I noticed the netting he was using to grow his sugar snap peas. This netting had 6 inch square openings and would be perfect for this year’s crop of pole beans. The openings are large enough to reach through and harvest the beans from either side of the row. Clay told me his source for the netting and I ordered mine that week. Since the beans got to be 8 foot tall last year, I decided to make this year’s trellis 10 foot tall. I have no idea how I will pick the beans at the top of the trellis, but it will be fun to watch them grow.
Managing Livestock in Drought Conditions

~Jennifer King, Livestock Agent

It looks like this summer is going to be another scorcher. For many, summer is synonymous with cold lemonade, fresh watermelon and beautiful days at the pool. It can be a slightly different story for farmers who face the possibility of drought conditions. The lack of moisture will take its toll on pastures and limit the amount of grazing for livestock.

The first step in managing livestock in a drought would be to restrict the animals to a smaller portion of the pasture for as long as possible. This method will let the remainder of the pasture grow before it is heavily grazed. It is always wise to have at least a thirty day supply of feed or hay stored for livestock. A years’ worth of emergency feed is preferred if enough storage space is available. Plan to purchase this additional feed or hay in advance before supplies get limited as the hot summer progresses.

Once feed and hay is hard to come by, drought-stressed crops can sometimes be salvaged as feed. If you are able to obtain damaged crops, it is important to test for nutritional value and toxicity. Nitrate poisoning and aflatoxins are always a concern in dry years and a forage test will be able to determine if the feed is safe to give to animals. It is also possible to use alternative feeding methods like recycled poultry bedding, soybean hulls, wheat middlings or cotton gin trash to extend the amount of normal feed or forage you have. Forage and feed analysis forms are available at the Cooperative Extension office. Bring your sample in a gallon size Ziploc bag along with $10 and we will send your sample to the NC Department of Agriculture testing laboratory for a complete analysis.

If drought conditions become extremely severe, you may need to consider reducing the number of animals on your land. Culling cattle and small ruminants may be the easiest solution for producers who don’t have adequate forage for their entire herd. Consider selecting animals that are not profitable, have not successfully reproduced, are elderly, or have major defects. Be prepared to fertilize your pastures this fall to make the most out of the forage available and to prepare for the winter months and always make sure your animals have access to a dependable water source.

Here are some excellent tips from agricultural specialists at The Noble Foundation for managing livestock in a drought:

1) Adjust stocking rate to the carrying capacity of dry years, then take advantage of favorable years with alternative enterprises such as retained ownership, stockers, etc.
2) Know the seasonal forage flow and be prepared to adjust the stock flow accordingly.
3) Plan for water availability. Gain access to large water reservoirs or well water if possible. Graze areas with limited water reserves first.
4) Add additional fencing. Crossfences increase the number of paddocks, increasing the ability to control graze and rest periods. Avoid the temptation to "throw open" all of the gates.
5) Lengthen pasture rest periods during slow or no growth times. Plants can withstand severe grazing if followed by proper rest periods. These rest periods allow plants time to replenish tissues above and below the ground.
6) Know critical dates for rainfall and forage growth. These dates coincide with seasonal temperatures and day length that directly affect the forage flow of the forage types.
7) Have animals selected in advance to sell. Establish levels of culling, such as: first level, open cows; second level, low or poor producers; third level, growing stock and large calves; fourth level, old cows and noncom formers, etc.
8) Consider early weaning to avoid poor conception the next year. During droughts, forages decline rapidly in quality as well as quantity. Wean calves before the end of the breeding season to decrease the cows’ nutrient requirements by half, which could mean the difference between rebreeding or not.
10) Only drought feed for a good reason! It is usually more cost efficient to move cattle to a location with abundant forage, than to have forage shipped to an area in drought.
Hot Fun Takes a Cool Ride
~Roger Cobb, Field Crops Agent

A lot of jobs on the farm are not too pleasant in the heat of the summer. There have been many improvements over the years to make some farm work not quite as unpleasant in the heat but some jobs are just as hot as ever.

Machinery improvements have been a bright spot for farmers who have to work out in the field in the heat. Tractors are one of the best examples of this.

Spending hours out in the hot sun on an open tractor worked on your tan but really wasn’t all that good for the operator’s health. The first improvement in this area was getting a canopy on the tractor which served two purposes. First, it protected the operator in the event there was a rollover. You were now protected from being crushed in the event the tractor tipped over as long as you had your seat belt on. The second benefit was the blocking of the sun by the canopy. It makes quite a difference in temperature on a hot day to have the sun blocked. If a little breeze is stirring it isn’t too bad at all.

About the same time the canopy became popular on the tractor, you were beginning to see cabs appear. These cabs were often aftermarket cabs added after the tractors arrived at the dealership. At first the cabs were just enclosures that kept the cold off of you in the winter time. The heat still was a problem in the summer. Often the doors could be removed and glass taken out so you wouldn’t die from the heat. Fans were added to give the operator some relief.

Then someone finally decided if people who rode in a car for a commute to work needed air conditioning, what about a farmer who sat on a tractor for hours at the time? Hence, companies started putting cabs on tractors and equipping them with both heat and air conditioning. This also protected the operators in the event of a rollover, kept the sun off, protected them from dust and other elements and also protected the hearing of the operator. After a long day in the seat you weren’t cooked and choked with dust.

Sometimes we joke about someone in the air conditioning baling hay or whatever but this has helped some farmers remain healthy. Farmers are usually less fatigued when they are cooler and are not in the dust. Being more alert usually means they make fewer mistakes.

Combines also benefitted from cabs being put on them. It is usually dusty while you are combining and in some crops it is extremely dusty. This has made combining crops better for the operator. With every improvement there can be a drawback. With cabs on equipment the drawback is the maintenance on the air conditioner itself. They are being asked to perform in harsh conditions and can break down in the most inconvenient times. When it stops working it becomes almost unbearable to stay inside. Always keep the number for a good repairman close by. Remember, some hot summer jobs can be made more pleasant through modern technology. Not everything was better in “the good old days.”
Hot Summer Fun with 4-H!

~Beth Davis, 4-H Agent

Every summer, Alamance County 4-H offers a wide variety of activities for kids. Some are indoors in the air conditioning, but there are some that are held outside because you’ve got to have Hot Fun in the Summertime!

Our “Horsin’ Around” class is held in Snow Camp and is hosted and taught by members of the Southern Alamance Horse Club. This class is for ages 5-18 and covers grooming, hippology (the study of horses…not hippos!), tack, and pony rides. Alamance County 4-H has hosted this class for several years now and it is always one of our popular offerings. What is so great about this class is that each station is taught by 4-H members. These kids have studied all about horses and are comfortable teaching other kids of all ages what they’ve learned. It’s a great way to showcase how 4-H has had a positive influence in their lives.

Another popular Summer Fun activity is Kayaking. This class was so popular the first time we offered it that we now have two sections! One of our 4-H dads, Gary Gerringer, takes our 4-H groups on a guided trip down the Haw River. Before the kids head down the river, he goes over safety and discusses a few things they might see while they are paddling. One life lesson that can be learned from kayaking is thinking ahead. You really have to pay attention to the river so you will know how to maneuver your boat so you won’t run into rocks, trees, or other barriers. If you do see barriers ahead, you can plan your way around them. In life, we all have barriers, but if we look ahead, we can strategize ways to deal with those barriers.

The Dogwood 4-H Club has offered “Clover Camping” as a Summer Fun activity for several years. This class is specifically for kids ages 5-8, also known in the 4-H world as Cloverbuds. Many parents with children this age aren’t comfortable sending their kids to a week-long overnight camp, but they are okay bringing them to a half day at Cedarock Park to learn all about camping. Some of the activities include pitching a tent, making a snack, playing games, singing camp songs, story time, and crafts. Just like the Horsin’ Around class, this class is taught by 4-Hers. They are responsible for leading different parts of this class. One valuable lesson that camping teaches us is to be prepared. When you’re outside, you have to be prepared for weather, bugs, heat, getting lost, etc. Being prepared can help in any situation!

What is one characteristic that every parent wishes their child could have? That’s right, PATIENCE! Well, if fishing doesn’t require patience, I don’t know what does! Every year, the staff from Soil & Water teach “Fishing Fun” where kids ages 5-18 can come learn about water quality and fish. This is always held at Cedarock Park, so each child can bring their fishing pole and have the opportunity to fish. While the kids are there fishing, they get the chance to see the “fish truck” unload fish into the pond. It’s pretty cool to see all these fish shoot out of a tube into the pond!

Summer often brings high temperatures, making us want to stay inside in the A/C, but as long as you slap on your sunscreen and bug spray and drink plenty of water, you can always have Hot Fun with 4-H in the Summertime!

For more information on 4-H Summer Fun classes, contact Beth Davis, 4-H Agent at 336-570-6740 or check out our website: http://alamance.ces.ncsu.edu.