Hello, Harford County!

Now that the growing season is in full swing, you’re hopefully seeing some explosive plant growth. If your fields seem less than fertile, however, you might be wondering what’s holding your plants back from their full potential.

If a routine soil test shows that your pH and fertility are in line, consider checking out your soil’s organic matter. Depending on the soil testing lab you use, organic matter may or may not be included in the basic test package. For agronomic soils, strive for a soil organic matter (SOM) of higher than 3%. Manipulating SOM requires a careful balance of inputs and amendments, but with the right strategy a SOM of 4% or higher is possible in our area.

SOM is the proportion of the soil that is made of things that used to be living but have since decomposed into a stable form called humus. SOM is an essential part of soil structure as it acts like a glue that holds soil particles together. Organic matter helps soil particles aggregate, or clump together, creating the pore structure in soil that is crucial for root aeration, drainage, and water holding capacity. SOM also aids in fertility because it increases the soil’s cation exchange capacity, essentially holding more nutrients in reserve for when plants need them. Similarly, it impacts the soil’s ability to hold water but not tie it up so that it’s available for plants to use. SOM also helps the soil retain its natural capacity to buffer against changes in pH; in our area, soils tend to become acidic over time, but higher SOM helps to prevent this from occurring.

There is no quick fix for improving SOM, but there are simple steps you can take to improve it over time.

- Use less tillage. SOM is reduced by aeration, humidity, and high temperature. If you utilize a no-till or reduced tillage approach, you prevent these conditions from reaching the soil and thus preserve your SOM.

- Increase the amount of organic material you add to the soil. Leaving crop residues on the field, using green manures, and fertilizing with animal manures are all ways to add organic material. Remember, however, that organic material is organic material that has already decomposed into a stable state — so adding composted materials is a quicker way to increase SOM.

- Reduce erosion. Most SOM is found in topsoil; when topsoil is lost, so is SOM. If your SOM is adequate now, don’t forget that it can be depleted by tillage and erosion. Maintaining SOM is just as important as building it!

Sincerely,

Sara BhaduriHauck
Ag Extension Educator
sbh@umd.edu
Dr. Nathaniel Tablante: From Extension to Legislation

By Rachael Keeney

Extension Poultry Specialist and Veterinarian in the Veterinary Medicine Department, Dr. Nathaniel Tablante has spent the last seven months of his sabbatical leave serving as a Congressional Fellow in the office of Representative Sanford D. Bishop, Jr. (D-GA-02), where he has advised Bishop on issues affecting agriculture (particularly the poultry industry), education, food safety, and public health.

Tablante had prepared background memos, briefing materials, questions, and testimonials for hearings on the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and other related agencies, all the while providing Congressman Bishop with an agricultural perspective essential for successful legislation.

“While veterinarians who can address these issues are employed in various federal agencies such as the USDA and FDA, the task of dealing with agricultural, including poultry, issues is left mainly to legislative staff in Congress,” Tablante explained. “Science-based information therefore becomes critical when lawmakers propose bills that may later become laws.”

Therefore, Tablante thanks his Department Chair, Dr. Samal, Dean Wei, and the Associate Provost for Academic Affairs for understanding how this fellowship largely overlaps with his extension work. He is also grateful to connect with Congressman Bishop over poultry concerns, as Bishop represents a Georgia district with a large poultry industry and also serves as co-Chair of the Congressional Chicken Caucus.

“As a poultry veterinarian who has worked in government, industry, and academic, I am fully aware of the issues facing the poultry industry and how they impact the economy, public health, health of poultry workers, and poultry welfare,” Tablante said. “Because of my experience and expertise...I felt I could provide useful advice on poultry and other animal and public health issues.”

Though Tablante was thrilled to be approved for his sabbatical leave, his transition from an academic setting to a political one was a challenge, inspiring him to someday write a “Fellows Manual,” helping future fellows better adjust to life on Capitol Hill.

“I would like to get the Congressional Chicken Caucus to become more active in addressing critical poultry industry issues,” Tablante went on. “In particular, I would like to set up a series of briefings for Congressional staffers on current “hot” issues such as food safety and poultry worker safety. I also plan to contribute user-friendly links to grant opportunities for constituents on Mr. Bishop’s website.”

Tablante hopes to accomplish these tasks by the time his fellowship ends this August, at which time he will return to UMD to resume his academic duties and Extension activities.

“To be able to work as a staff member in Congressman Bishop’s office and actually participate in day-to-day activities is an experience I will remember and value for the rest of my life,” Tablante said, also noting how the experience has been both wonderful and rewarding. “I have certainly learned a lot about the legislative process and now have a greater understanding of how Congress works and a much greater appreciation of the democratic process.”

Herbal Deworming Fails to Control Parasites

By Dahlia O’Brien, Delaware State University

Over the last few years, a number of studies have been done to test the effectiveness of commercially-available herbal dewormers. Most recently, two studies were conducted at Delaware State University to test how effective Hoegger’s Herbal Wormer was in reducing fecal egg counts in meat goat kids and lactating does. This dewormer is distributed by Hoegger’s Goat Supply (Fayetteville, GA) and contains a mixture of dried plant materials including wormwood, gentian, fennel, psyllium and quassia. Individually, these ingredients have all been reported to have possible deworming properties capable of reducing internal parasites in livestock. However, most of this information is anecdotal and not supported by scientific data. So far, scientific studies evaluating commercial, non-chemical dewormers have found that they fail to reduce fecal egg counts in sheep and goats. The results from these two studies also supports that at the recommended dose and under the conditions of the studies, Hoegger’s Herbal Wormer was not an effective dewormer.
Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea Virus Reportable Disease

Because of the growing impact that the Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea virus (PEDv) is having on swine herds across the nation, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has made PEDv a reportable disease – meaning any farmer or veterinarian who has a pig with PEDv must now report it to their state agriculture department in an attempt to slow the spread of the disease. PEDv only infects pigs, poses no known public health threat and is not a food safety concern. The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) confirmed one case of PEDv last October at a small farm in Southern Maryland. At that time, MDA alerted swine producers across the state to take proper precautions to protect their herds. MDA has also been distributing a fact sheet to swine producers telling them what to look for and how to increase their biosecurity measures. MDA does not know of any active cases of PEDv in Maryland at this time. PEDv is a highly contagious disease among pigs and is often fatal in suckling and early weaned pigs, with mortality rates as high as 100 percent. Older animals experience a setback in growth rate of about 3-7 days but generally recover. The virus was first diagnosed in Europe in 1971 but was not confirmed in the United State until last May. Primary clinical signs of the disease are: severe diarrhea in pigs of all ages, vomiting and high morbidity and mortality. It is generally spread among pigs and by infected feces transported into pig areas by trucks, boots, clothing, and the like. Once infected, the incubation period is very short (12-24 hours) and the virus is shed for 7-10 days. Producers who suspect their pigs are sick should contact their veterinarian immediately. The swine industry is a small segment of Maryland’s agricultural sector. Maryland had about 23,000 pigs in 2012 with cash receipts of $8.8 million, according to the USDA National Agricultural Statistic Service; however, raising pigs is popular among 4H Clubs and showing them is a big draw at county fairs and livestock exhibition shows across the state. Because of the PEDv virus, the procedures and regulations for showing pigs at upcoming events have been upgraded to emphasize stricter biosecurity measures for all exhibitors to minimize risks. Producers and veterinarians who have questions, concerns or need to report a case of PEDv should contact MDA’s Animal Health Program at: 410-841-5810. (Source—Maryland Department of Agriculture. Abridged.)

By Sara BhaduriHauck, University of Maryland Extension—Harford County

Keeping Horses on a Budget

Horses are expensive to care for, and the expenses can quickly become burdensome unless they are managed carefully. It is possible, however, to keep horse care costs to a minimum while still providing a high standard of care.

Before you can determine where to cut expenses, you must first have a good understanding of what your average monthly expenses are. It is a good idea to determine your average monthly expenses based on at least one year’s worth of data. Some expenses, like board, are constant from month to month, but other expenses vary monthly based on time of year or frequency of need. Determine how much you spend for your horses in total, but also break out those expenses into categories (board, feed, veterinary care, supplies, etc.) and by individual horse. This information can help you prioritize where to focus cost-cutting efforts.

It is also helpful to categorize each expense as a need or a want. All horses need adequate feed, water, and shelter and regular care by a veterinarian, farrier, and dentist. Anything you pay for above this basic level of care should be considered a want.

Once you have a thorough understanding of your expenses, you can begin to consider ideas for reducing them. As you do so, remember that horses require quality care. Budget-minded owners may find ways to maintain horses more cheaply but should never do so at the cost of the horse’s welfare.

The list of ideas below may help you formulate a plan for...
reducing your expenses.

**Board and housing facilities**
- Let your horses live out or choose pasture board.
- Choose a boarding facility that fits your budget. Facilities with special amenities, like an indoor riding ring, usually charge more for board than facilities without these amenities.
- Board closer to home. Fuel and wear and tear on your car account for significant expense.
- Help with farm chores in exchange for a reduced boarding rate.

**Feed**
- Don’t overfeed; don’t feed concentrates unless your horse needs them. Concentrated feeds like grain are generally more expensive than forages like hay and are not required in every horse’s diet. Formulate a ration balanced for your horse, and compare that to what you are currently feeding.
- Feed pasture to replace as much hay as possible.
- Critically evaluate your use of supplements. They are not required in every horse’s diet.
- Decrease wasted feed, especially wasted hay. Hay fed on the ground is easily wasted, as is hay fed outdoors once it gets wet. Invest in a covered round bale feeder, slow-feed hay net, or other type of feeding equipment designed to reduce waste.
- Buy hay in the summer when supply is high and prices are at their lowest.
- Feed round bales instead of square bales or bagged hay. On a per pound basis, round bales are usually the least expensive of these options.

**Supplies**
- Price shop and check out online stores. The Internet makes comparison shopping easy. Some companies charge more for basic farm supplies that they market to horse owners; don’t forget to check general farm store prices, too.
- Think critically before making purchases. Limit your spending to replacing supplies that are consumed, broken, or worn out.

- Wait for sales, and buy things at the end of the season. Plan ahead, and be patient. If your horse’s blanket needs to be replaced, buy a new one in the spring when blankets go on clearance.
- Stop feeding treats. While they’re not usually expensive, treats are an unnecessary expense. Reward your horse instead by hand grazing him for a few minutes or scratching his favorite spot.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of consumable products you use regularly. Products like hoof conditioner and fly spray may or may not be effective at what they claim to do. Use your personal experience and advice from your vet and farrier to decide if the perceived benefit to your horse is worth the price.

**Other ideas**
- Participate in fewer lessons or competitions. Switch from private to group lessons, or take a lesson every other week instead of every week. Reduce the number of shows you participate in.
- Buy a hardy horse. Some breeds of horses are generally easier keepers than others. If you’re looking to buy a new horse, consider one that will require the least inputs to maintain.
- Eliminate horses that cost more than average to maintain. Hobby owners may find it hard to part with beloved pets, but those operating horse businesses should consider this option. Horses that require special feed, routine medical treatments, or other extra care may cost more money to maintain than they bring back to the business in profit.
- Half lease your horse to someone. Leasing is one way to substantially reduce your cost by up to 50% or more, depending on the terms of the lease. If you lease your horse, be sure to have a written lease agreement, and have the lessee sign a hold harmless agreement. These documents will ensure that you and the lessee are on the same page about how the horse is to be used and will protect you from liability.
Farm Camp

Farm Camp sows the seeds of responsibility, respect, community, and stewardship. You can expect your child to have a hands-on farm experience learning about planting and harvesting vegetables, bees and honey, eggs and chickens, bunnies and goats, feeding and caring for animals, farm equipment, and more. While there is a focus on farming, campers will also have a well-rounded camp experience participating in activities like arts and crafts, games, and nature exploration. Only a few spaces remain, so register today! The camp is limited to 20 kids, ages 8-12. Cost is $250 per child. For more details, contact the Maryland Agricultural Resource Council at 410-229-0530.

August 11-15, 2014
8:30 a.m.—4:30 p.m.
Baltimore County Ag Center
Cockeysville, MD

Miss Harford County Farm Bureau Contest

Harford County Farm Bureau is currently searching for participants for the Miss Harford County Farm Bureau Contest to be held at the Farm Fair on Thursday, July 31. The contest is sponsored by the Harford County Farm Bureau. It is open to single girls at least 16 years of age but not 20 years of age by the time of the Maryland State Contest. The contestant and/or her family must belong to the Harford County Farm Bureau or be willing to join if their daughter is chosen. She should have a strong desire to represent agriculture in Harford County and throughout the state of Maryland. If selected as Miss Harford County Farm Bureau, she will go on to represent Harford County at the Miss Maryland Agriculture Contest during the State Fair. She will have the opportunity to meet 22 other young ladies involved in agriculture, gain leadership experiences, and compete to win over $12,000 in scholarships. If you or someone you know might be interested, please contact Hannah Amoss at 443-243-5112 or through email at amossHR18@aol.com.

Notice to all UMD Extension clients:
All client files will be reviewed for supporting data this summer. That will include accuracy and completeness of all maps in the nutrient management plans. An additional bit of information will be marked on the maps which is the distance to the water. If you have any map changes or improvements, your input will be welcomed this summer to avoid this time-consuming task during the busy planning season this fall. Thank for you attention to this detail.

Notice to fruit growers:
Just a reminder to check your tissue analysis dates. They are good for three years unless you see a problem and feel the need to investigate.

- Blueberries need to be sampled the first week of harvest.
- Brambles are sampled August 1 through August 20.
- Fruit trees are sampled July 15 through September 1.
- Grapes are sampled at full bloom.

Soil samples should be taken at the same time to go with the tissue samples since both are used to determine ideal fertilizer recommendation.

By Patricia Hoopes, Harford County Nutrient Management Advisor
The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has approved Maryland Department of Agriculture’s (MDA’s) request for a Special Local Needs label for Haosulfuron-methyl (Sandea Herbicide, EPA registration number 81880-18) specific to cucumbers. The permit allows applicators to adjust the pre-harvest interval from 30 to 21 days, as needed, to allow for broadleaf weed and nutsedge control closer to actual harvest when greater weed populations are present. This permit expires on December 31, 2018. Questions about this Special Local Needs (24-c) can be directed to Phil Davidson at philip.davidson@maryland.gov or at 410-841-2721.

**Specific Exemption for Stink Bug Control**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has approved Maryland Department of Agriculture’s (MDA’s) request for a specific exemption to allow the use of Dinofeturan to control brown marmorated stink bugs in pome and stone fruits in Maryland orchards. This specific exemption applies to Venom Insecticide (EPA registration number 59639-135, manufactured by Valent U.S.A. Corporation) and Scorpion  

25SL (EPA registration number 10163-137, manufactured by Gowan Campany, LLC). For each of these products, a maximum of two applications can be made per acre per season and with a minimum 7-day application interval. Only foliar applications made by ground equipment are permitted. Additional stipulations apply; more details are available from the Harford County Extension Office. This specific exemption expires on October 15, 2014. Please note that when applying these products under this Section 18, the applicator must have in their possession a copy of the approved Section 18 label for this use. For more information, contact the Pesticide Regulation Section of the Maryland Department of Agriculture at 410-841-5710.

**Pesticide Container Recycling**

The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) is offering the empty plastic pesticide container recycling program again this year. Triple—rinsed, clean, plastic pesticide containers will be collected according to the schedule listed below. Containers acceptable for recycling will be chipped and transported for processing at an approved recycling facility. To ensure a successful program, each individual container will be inspected by MDA personnel. Any container that is not clean will be returned to the owner, who will be responsible for disposing of the container in a legal manner. Any size container will be accepted, but all containers over 30 gallons must be cut prior to recycling (contact MDA for instruction). Please remove lids and label booklets prior to recycling.

**Scarboro Landfill**, 3241 Scarboro Road in Street
June 6, July 3, August 8, and September 5 from 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

**The Mill of Black Horse**, 4551 Norrisville Road in White Hall
Containers will be accepted June 1 through September 30 during normal business hours from current customers only. For hours of operation and drop-off instructions, call 410-329-6010.
Are you dreaming of rural entrepreneurship? If so, then the “My Business: Sharing the Journey” video series at the Maryland Rural Enterprise Development Center website is for you! Each video in the series features a successful rural entrepreneur in Maryland. These entrepreneurs are driven and motivated by their passion and belief in what they do and that the product or service they offer benefits others. The goal of the video series is to capture the excitement of rural entrepreneurship and present the information in a way that motivates other potential entrepreneurs into action. In each “kitchen table interview,” the entrepreneur is asked a series of questions. The interview captures the details of their business journey from idea to implementation with emphasis on the highlights and train wrecks along the way. The resulting video delivers a story with a great level of honesty and inspiration. While products and pathways to their business destinations vary, these entrepreneurs all share some common sustainable business attributes: they are profitable; they consider themselves good stewards of the land and other resources; they contribute to their local communities, markets, and business networks; and they are happy and passionate about their career paths. Check out the videos at extension.umd.edu/mredc/resource-library/videos.

By Ginger S. Myers, Marketing Specialist, University of Maryland Extension

Retail beef prices are at a 20 year high. I have been asked, why? Why is beef so high?

The reasons: 1) Less beef in the U.S. due to drought and weather; 2) We are exporting more beef and increasing imports of more lower-quality beef to be made into ground beef; and 3) the drought from two years ago forced a lot of farmers to sell their herds due to lack of foodstuffs, and they are not replenished due to the current high demand.

The list goes on...the national average for ground beef is currently $5.39 per pound. Prices are not looking to scale back until 2015. A good steak hasn’t cost this much in America since Ronald Reagan was president. A dwindling number of cattle and the growing export demand from countries such as China and Japan have caused the average retail cost of fresh beef to climb to $5.28 per pound in February, up almost a quarter from January and the highest price since 1987.

“Everything that’s produced is being consumed,” says Kevin Good, an analyst at Cattle Fax, a Colorado-based information group. “Prices likely will stay high for a couple of years as cattle producers start to rebuild their herds amid big questions about whether the Southwest and parts of the Midwest will see enough rain to replenish pastures.”

Consider that from the time a bull meets a cow in the pasture until producers get a T-bone out of the deal is two full years. And the market is still reeling from the 2009 and 2011 droughts. During the depths of the drought, Texas ranchers dumped their cattle into slaughterhouses. So for the past couple of years, fewer cows have given birth to fewer calves, interrupting what is usually a steady supply of cattle.

But while meat prices are on the rise, it would be wise to stop and comparison shop the nutrient value of some popular food purchases in comparison to a pound of ground beef. I recently went to the local grocery store and collected prices on several items for current pricing. I converted the pound price for the following products to a per ounce price for easier comparison. I used the $5.39 per pound price for ground beef.

- Ground beef—$0.337 per ounce
- Utz potato chips—$0.452 per ounce
- Jiff peanut butter—$0.225 per ounce
- Snickers bites—$0.499 per ounce

Local beef supplies are still in good supply and a great food dollar value. Maryland farm-raised beef can be found at farmers’ markets, purchased directly from farmers having their meat processed and sold from their farm, or from local retailers that partner with local producers to put Maryland farm-raised meats in their freezer cases.
The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) has announced that its 2014-2015 Cover Crop Sign-Up will take place at soil conservation districts statewide June 24 through July 15. There are two planting options available. Traditional cover crops receive a base rate of $45/acre and up to $55/acre in add on incentives for using highly valued planting practices. Traditional cover crops may not be harvested, but can be grazed or chopped for livestock forage for on-farm use after becoming well established. Harvested cover crops qualify for $25/acre with a bonus payment of $10/acre if rye is used as the cover crop. Barley, canola, rapeseed, kale, rye, ryegrass, spring oats, triticale and wheat planted in the fall of 2014 are eligible. New this year, farmers may mix any two approved cover crop species to create diversity; mixes, however, do not qualify for the $10/acre rye bonus. Farmers may use seed they have saved, but all seed used is required to meet Maryland Seed Law and Regulatory Standards and have a minimum germination rate of 80 percent. Farmers should check their mailboxes for informational flyers on the 2014-2015 Cover Crop Program. Information is also available at www.mda.maryland.gov (click on the top Conservation tab, then click on Financial Assistance and Cover Crops) or by contacting the Harford Soil Conservation District at 410-838-6181x3.

Two important surveys will be conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) soon. The June Agricultural Survey (also known as the Crops/Stocks Survey) – which 70,000 farmers nationally began receiving in May – will provide detailed estimates on the number of acres producers planted of particular commodities and the amount of grain and oilseed they have stored on the farm. The June Area Survey develops comprehensive estimates of land uses and agricultural activities across the United States. The June Area Survey will sample nearly 65,000 producers on 11,000 selected segments of land. Those who receive any NASS survey may respond online, by mail or by fax. (Source: MDA. Abridged.)

October 11-12, 2014
9:00 a.m.—5:00 p.m.
Baltimore County Ag Center
Cockeysville, MD

This two-day, hands-on workshop demystifies tractors and empowers their users to operate and maintain their machines more safely and with greater skill and confidence. The first day will include an introduction to all of the operating features of a tractor; a primer (with props) on the internal combustion engine; safety precautions and daily routine maintenance checks. If time allows, supervised tractor driving practice and attaching implements with a three-point hitch will be covered. Day two will cover all the basic “do-it-yourself” yearly maintenance jobs (change engine oil/filter, air filter, fuel filter, coolant, hydraulic transmission fluid; add grease to all grease fittings; check air pressure in tires; adjust fan belt; replace spark plugs; etc). The course is limited to 12 students, but a waiting list will be compiled and new course dates added if response is high. Registration is $225 before June 1, $275 before August 1, and $300 before October 1. For more information or to register, contact the Maryland Agricultural Resource Council at 410-229-0530.
Legal Services Directory Available for MD Farmers

The Agriculture Law Education Initiative, in conjunction with the newly formed Maryland State Bar Association (MSBA) Special Committee on Agriculture, has published the 2014 Legal Services Directory to better serve the needs of Maryland farmers. The Directory lists the 2014 members of the committee who provide services and information related to the law and agricultural practices. The directory includes full contact information, practice areas, and counties and states served. For more information, visit www.mpowermaryland.com or contact Paul Goeringer, Extension Legal Specialist in the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, at lgoering@umd.edu or 301-405-3541.

2014 Farmers’ Market Listings Available

The 2014 Maryland Farmers’ Market listings of locations and hours for each of the state’s markets is now available through the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) website. This year, some 150 markets will be open with at least one in every county and Baltimore City. A searchable database of farmers’ market locations, hours, and producer/vendor and product listings is available on the Maryland’s Best website at www.marylandsbest.net. Farmers’ markets have become increasingly popular: in 1991, there were only 20 markets; there were 88 in 2008; 131 last year; and there will be 150 this year. (Source: Maryland Department of Agriculture—abridged.)

MD 4-H Day at Camden Yards

June 29, 2014
1:35 p.m. game time
Oriole Park at Camden Yards
Baltimore, MD

Here’s an opportunity for 4-H youth, family, friends, and alumni to enjoy some Orioles baseball while supporting the 4-H cause! Join us at Camden Yards to see the Orioles play the Tampa Bay Rays. Tickets are $13, and $5 from each ticket will be donated to Maryland 4-H. (Note that there is an additional 10% service charge per ticket.) Seating is in the upper reserve, sections 316-356, rows 13-25. To purchase tickets, visit www.orioles.com/tix/maryland4h, select a quantity of tickets, create a Baltimore Orioles ticket account, and then purchase and print your tickets. This offer is not valid at the Box Office, and tickets posted for re-sale are subject to cancellation. For any questions or to request accessible seating, please call 888-848-2473 and ask for the ticket services team.

Dear readers—I will be away from the Extension Office on maternity leave for a minimum of eight weeks beginning at the end of June 2014. Publication of this newsletter will be put on hold during this time but will resume in the fall. During the summer, I will do my best to keep you updated through our electronic channels, including our e-mail listserv and Facebook page. Thank you for your understanding, and remember that you can contact the office any time!

Sincerely,

Sara Meagher BhaduriHauck
Faculty Extension Assistant
Agriculture and Natural Resources

sbh@umd.edu
Extension.umd.edu/Harford-county
facebook.com/HarfordAg

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